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# **THE NATURE OF SELF**



# THE NATURE OF SELF

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## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

My object in the following lines is to make a humble contribution to one of the most baffling and slippery problems of philosophy, *viz*, the problem of self. I have tried here, with the help of relevant representative thoughts in the Western as well as Indian philosophy, to develop a theory of self which has long appeared to me to be alone capable of resolving the numerous perplexities with which the problem has been riddled in the history of philosophical thought. The subject is too vast to be adequately treated in a single treatise, and, consequently, I have restricted myself here to the most general features of the problem which alone lend themselves to a strictly epistemological discussion. Philosophy, I believe, cannot dispense with logic and epistemology, and all conclusions that are not guaranteed by epistemology must necessarily be built on a rope of sands. Hence, many interesting special problems connected with the problem of self have not been discussed here, because they may be easily deduced from the general principles only when the latter have a sound logical basis.

Comparative philosophy has so far been either predominantly historical and descriptive, or it has contented itself with discovering stray similarities



between the Western and Indian thought. No serious attempt, as far as I know, has yet been made to undertake a comparative study for mutual supplementation of arguments and consequent clarification of issues. Yet, this alone can suggest the paths to new constructions and thus help the development of philosophical thought.

I am not one of those who believe that Indian Philosophy contains wisdom which is unsurpassed and unsurpassable, yet, it must be granted that Truth is not discovered everyday. What is true is eternally true, and so far as its discovery is concerned, the past attempts, I believe, have not been as illusive as the quest of the Holy Grail. We may, therefore, still draw inspiration for our philosophical constructions from the great thinkers, such as Plato and Aristotle, or Śaṅkara and Śrīharṣa. A philosophy that pretends to be entirely original must stand self-condemned.

A word may be added here in order to avoid a possible misunderstanding. In the course of my discussions, I have found it profitable to refer frequently to the arguments of the well-known Indian monist, Śaṅkara, and so far the present work may be also characterized as some sort of a logical envisagement, in the light of modern thought, of Śaṅkara's theory of self. But my interpretation of the 'advaita' position differs so fundamentally from the current inter-

pretations, and Śaṅkara's analysis of experience has been developed here in such new directions, that I must be prepared for bearing the full responsibility for all that is said in these pages without forcing a great thinker to make amends for any sins I may have committed

For a work like the present, it is not easy for an author to state definitely his obligations, for, any form of acknowledgment must be either too wide or too narrow. In a sense, I am indebted for whatever light I possess to all those authors whose works have helped me, directly or indirectly, for arriving at the position expounded here, and I have acknowledged it at the appropriate places. My son, Mr D N Mukerji, M A, has helped me considerably in the preparation of the index and in many other ways

*March 2, 1938*

A C MUKERJI.

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The call for a second edition of this essay encourages me to believe that students of philosophy are awakening to the necessity of breaking through the crust of prejudices that has bred an isolationist attitude in the study of Indian thought. While the ideas of Plato and Aristotle have inspired remarkable constructions, Indian philosophy has only succeeded in rousing antiquarian interest, and, even when admired, the admiration is almost like what is excited by the mummies in a museum. Yet like most of the Indian systems Śāṅkara's analysis of experience, if approached in the critical rather than the exegetic spirit, would throw a flood of light on some of the perennial issues of epistemology and metaphysics that have been brought to prominence particularly by the philosophical discussion of to-day.

The changes in the present edition are more verbal than material, except that the Appendix B and a few foot-notes have been added. I take this opportunity to thank the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Allahabad for permission to make use of an essay published in the University of Allahabad Studies for the year 1939 from which the matter of Appendix B is substantially reproduced. Mr J. G. Varma, M. A., my student of the Research Department, has also earned my gratitude by re-casting the index and helping me generally in preparing the book for the new edition.

*October, 1943*

A. C. MUKERJI.

## ERRATA

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>Read</i>	<i>For</i>
10	24	<i>dementia præcox</i>	<i>dementia proecor</i>
13	6 and 12	causal	casual
18	13	or	of
19	4	has	as
154	26	<i>nirdhāritam</i>	<i>nirdhā-rit-m</i>
161	27	nice	mee
212	24	<i>tāttvīkah</i>	<i>tāttv-kah</i>
220	17	<i>Dhī</i>	<i>Dhi</i>
242	12	Deussen's	Duessen's
301	24	experience	expedience
378	10	infer	inffr
381	8	<i>aviṣayāntahpātī</i>	<i>aviṣayāntahpati</i>
382	18	<i>saṃrādhanaṃ</i>	<i>saṃrādhānam</i>



# CONTENTS

PAGE

## CHAPTER I

Introduction

**THE EGO-CENTRIC PARADOX** 1—23

The function of comparative philosophy 1

The philosophical and the historical attitude 3

The paradox implicit in the problem of self 5

The current methods of resolving the paradox 9

The common fallacy vitiating the empirical methods 11

An estimate of the transcendental method 17

Agnosticism involved in the transcendental theory  
of self 21

The need for a fresh solution 22

## CHAPTER II

**THE PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY** 24—66

A restatement of the paradox Sankara and Kant 24

The psychological attitude *versus* the epistemological 27

James Ward's psychological approach to experience 30

Sense and Thought 37

The limits of genetic psychology 46

Agnosticism is the result of separating thought from  
reality 58

Ward's treatment of Self-consciousness 59

	PAGE
CHAPTER III	
THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL THEORY	67—115
The origin of the epistemological theory in Kant and Hegel	68
The logical see-saw in the epistemological theories	71
Green's position represents one of the alternatives	74
Influence of Hegel on Green	78
E Caird represents the other alternative of the see-saw	82
E Caird's attempt to avoid agnosticism	87
The subject-object relation <i>versus</i> inter-objective relations	105
E Caird and Green	112

## CHAPTER IV

THE RELATIONAL THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS	116—139
Śankara's classification of the theories of consciousness	117
The self as the <i>Sākṣī</i>	120
In what sense is consciousness the <i>prius</i> of reality?	121
Can consciousness be denied? W James and the Mādhyamika philosophers	123
The root-fallacy of the current theories of consciousness	128
A true theory must avoid the extremes of presentationism and agnosticism	136

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### THE EGO-CENTRIC PARADOX

Philosophy as the thinking consideration of things has necessarily to assume that Truth is an eternal vision, a comprehension of Reality *sub specie æternitatis*. Every system of philosophy is an attempt to articulate this eternal vision through the zeitgeist or spiritual environment of the time in which the philosopher happens to live. The time-spirit, however, changes from age to age and from one country to another, and is so far limited by the conditions of space and time. But the Absolute Truth is independent of the spatio-temporal limitations, and so not relative to a particular age or country. Here lies the strength as well as the weakness of a particular system of philosophy. Its strength consists essentially in its being an organ for the self-expression of the eternal vision, but its weakness arises out of the necessity of expressing it through the changing spirit of the time. Once the time-spirit is changed, the expression, though adequate in an earlier age, fails to function as an efficient vehicle. This is why it has been often complained that Indian Philosophy,



“ in spite of all that has been written about it, remains somewhat dark to most English readers ” (J. Mackenzie, *Ultimate Values*, p 78 ) The greater the change in the intellectual and spiritual settings of thought, the harder it is to detect the Absolute in the relative, the Eternal in the temporal

But howsoever difficult the task may be, it is one that is worth undertaking in the interest of mutual clarification of issues, for the true aim of a comparative study of philosophical problems is to follow, as rigorously as possible, the universal dialectic of thought underlying the different formulations of a given problem, and thus detect the real source of their conflict and divergence

Such a study, evidently, is not identical with merely detecting and cataloguing the similarities between two thought-currents Philosophical systems may meet on a truth, or, again, they may meet on an error, and consequently their similarity does not necessarily vouchsafe the speculative worth of either And if perchance they meet on an error, it would be but a poor achievement to have been able to show how two systems have moved on parallel lines. The cause of truth can hardly be promoted by counting and tabulating logical aberrations in different philosophical systems It is only when a comparative study helps to trace these aberrations to their sources and thus clears the way to a more adequate comprehen-

sion of the Truth that the trouble is worth undertaking

In view of the function of comparative philosophy, as conceived here, we may easily distinguish between the historical and the philosophical treatment of a particular problem. History is primarily concerned with a faithful description of the ideas in a chronological order, and its function, therefore, is to present each system or theory as it was originally conceived by the inaugurators. On the other hand, the primary aim of comparative philosophy being to aid a fuller comprehension of the truth, here chronology has to be subordinated to critical evaluation, and description must be supplemented by interpretation. The historian is not bound to interpret, nay, the more he intrudes himself on his subject-matter, the less does he stick to his mission of being faithful to facts. But the personal factor cannot be wholly eliminated from a philosophical treatment, because he whose primary concern is to discover what is real and true has very often to make explicit what was left implicit in the original system and, if necessary, interpret and re-interpret its conflicting tendencies in the interest of logical consistency. Thus only is it possible to offer, by means of a comparative study, useful suggestions for new constructions and expose the pit-falls and fallacies in the different systems brought together for comparison.

These remarks on the function and utility of comparative philosophy will be amply substantiated in the following pages. Some of the fundamental paradoxes inherent in the problem of self, it will gradually appear, may be resolved successfully by following the inner dialectic of thought as it expresses itself in the conflicting speculations of two different ages and countries. These paradoxes have long crippled philosophical thought and the prospect of a successful resolution appears to be as remote to-day as it was in the age of those who were responsible for the inscriptions on the temple of Delphi. And if a comparative study throws a single ray of light in the way of partially disentangling thought from some of its baffling perplexities, it will certainly be welcome to the modern lovers of truth and reality. Let us then start with a short formulation of some of the paradoxes that have kept clinging to the problem of self.

It is but common knowledge that the solution of the supreme problem that was formulated in ancient India as well as Greece in the form of a command, namely, Know Thyself, was generally regarded as the *raison d'être* of philosophy. In India specially where life and philosophy were never separated from each other, the attainment of the Ultimate Purpose of Existence was made conditional on a right solution of this supreme problem, while all other philosophical

discussions owed their value to the light they could throw on the nature of self and the method of self-knowledge. Since the first formulation of the problem, Philosophy, both in the East and the West, has thrashed it to almost the last chaff, and consequently any pretension to absolute novelty will certainly betray one's inadequate acquaintance with the history of philosophy. While, however, admitting that almost all possible avenues of approach to the problem of self have been already explored, one may still claim that it is not yet impossible for a modern student to break fresh ground, if not in the capacity of an explorer, yet in that of an humble candle-bearer, and, in view of the importance as well as the difficulty of the problem, even the candle-bearer's office may be of some use for the philosophical pilgrims to the Temple of Truth.

The main difficulties of the problem of self have their root in a paradox. That every object of knowledge presupposes a self that knows it is almost a truism which is as clear as it is innocent. Yet this apparently innocent position has latent in it one of the most baffling paradoxes with which thought has ever been confronted. What is the self that is presupposed by every object? How is the knower known? If every object presupposes a self that knows it, should not there be another knower for knowing the first self? These are some of

the simple forms in which the ego-centric paradox has been historically formulated, and it has defied the acutest subtlety of dialectical intellect. In its attempt to resolve the paradox, thought has been involved in a series of humiliating subterfuges, and the history of philosophy, in so far as this paradox is concerned, has been the history of more or less disguised prevarications. A full justification of these remarks will be found in the following pages, yet it may be useful to begin with a short statement of the salient points of our contentions.

No one, we venture to think, is even in sight of the real problem of self-consciousness who fails to recognise what may be called the centrality of the ego in the knowledge situation. Though man has, like every other thing of the world, a particular origin and history of his own, yet there is a sense in which all the barriers of time and space break down for him in so far as he is connected cognitively with the world as a whole which evidently includes and goes beyond the limited period and history of his earthly existence. In this sense, though historical through and through, he is the possessor of all eternity and of all reality. This universal attitude of man in the knowledge-situation is an undeniable fact which no theory of self can ignore, irrespective of the divergent metaphysical implications which different theories

may have to draw out of it. And it is this universality which confers upon the self what may be analogically called the central function in the economy of the universe. This may be clarified in another way. A present fact, a past event, an idea, an instinct, the psychological complexes, the physiological glands,—these are all intelligible objects; if any of them had been unintelligible, it would have been as good as nothing for us, and the assertion of its existence would have no meaning. Now, the most universal conditions of intelligibility are just those laws of thought the validity of which is re-asserted in every attempt to deny their universal application. Though, however, they are primarily laws of thought in so far as thought cannot rest content with anything that contradicts itself, these laws are at the same time the universal features of things inasmuch as every conceivable thing must be a self-consistent unity on pain of reducing itself to nothing. If every finite thing, as Hegel and Bradley, or Nāgārjuna and Śrīharsa have maintained, must ultimately break down somewhere through inner inconsistencies, thought would start on a dialectical journey till the thing attained stability through self-transcendence, rather than stultify itself by repudiating its own laws. Hence unity is the most universal of the conditions of objectivity, to which must conform everything about which significant assertions can be made.

The unity of a thing, however, implies not only self-consistency but also determinateness; that is, it must be a determinate something. Determination, again, involves in its turn relations to things other than itself, and it is through these inter-objective relations, generally called categories, that all objects of thought receive mutual definiteness and clarification.

There is, however, a deeper condition of objectivity than even the relational categories. If it is true that everything must conform to the categories, it is true in a deeper sense that nothing is intelligible which does not exist for a self. Even if it be granted that the world of things exists independently of knowledge, the things must have at least the possibility of entering into the knowledge relation, and as within knowledge, they exist as objects for a subject or self. In this sense nothing on which we can hold intelligible discourse can exist except in relation to the self that is implied by the knowledge situation. Existence-for-self, therefore, is the *sine qua non* of all things, and there is an important sense in which it is a deeper condition of objectivity than the categories. The latter, though presupposed by every object of thought, can themselves be made objects of reflection through a sort of transcendental abstraction, and in so far as they become objects, the categories themselves presuppose the self as much as the things which they condition. Thus, the self is the deepest of the

transcendental conditions of objectivity, and is presupposed by, and consequently overreaches, all distinctions between form and matter, reality and appearance, man and God, spirit and matter, and so on. And it is this truth which we intend to express through the centrality of the ego, and, considered in this light, the self may be fitly, though still analogically, called the centre of an indefinite number of concentric circles, each periphery being occupied by one class of objects. It is perhaps clear from this centrality of the self that no theory of self-consciousness can claim to be satisfactory that seeks to resolve the ego-centric paradox by decentralizing the self and thus identifying the real self with one of the objects on the periphery.

To turn now to the problem of self-consciousness. How has philosophy resolved the ego-centric paradox? Two methods are clearly discernible in the history of philosophy, the experimental or the inductive method, and the logical or the transcendental method. Of these, the former, on account of its relative simplicity, has found favour with a large circle of contemporary metaphysicians and psychologists, while the latter has yielded important results at the hands of those who are generally known as idealists or transcendentalists. The inductive method, to begin with this, is the method to which are pledged the realist and the pragmatist, the psychologist and



the psycho-analyst 'Experience' is their battle-cry, and consequently no knowledge is supposed to be worth the name that has not stood the test of repeated observations and laboratory experiments. Thus, for example, B. Russell would challenge the truth of a number of traditional notions of philosophy—*e.g.*, the world is a systematic unity, knowledge implies the relation of subject with object, consciousness is an ultimate unanalysable fact—because they are inconsistent with the discoveries of comparative psychology. Similarly, J. B. Watson and his followers would propose to replace the terms consciousness, mental states, mind and the like, by muscular and glandular changes following upon a given stimulus, because the former are supposed to be gratuitous hypotheses for a scientific explanation of human and animal behaviours. Lastly, the discoveries of the psycho-neurotic hospital are supposed to be equally fatal to some of the traditional theories of philosophers about the unity of self or the reality of a pure ego. Neurosis following on unsuccessful repression, the pathological manifestations consequent on excessive introversion, sudden onsets of dissociation, gradual sinking into *dementia proecor*, hypnosis, dreams, and the apparently trifling slips of pen and tongue—these are some of the hard facts guaranteed by experience and not *a priori* speculations and mere theories. It is a careful scientific study of these facts

alone, it is widely and emphatically claimed, that will ultimately answer the command—Know Thyself.

After what has been said above about the centrality of the ego, it is not at all difficult to detect the common fallacy vitiating all these empirical methods of analysing knowledge in terms of something other than itself. The fallacy is the outcome of an obstinate objective attitude of mind and may be called the fallacy of decentralization of the self arising out of the identification of the true self with the peripheral objects that may consequently be called spurious selves or pseudo-egos. And the fallacy is at least as old as the Nyāya Philosophy of India, which Locke has comparatively recently introduced into Western philosophy. The conception of knowledge as a property of a particular class of things in what Alexander has aptly called the democracy of the universe is indissolubly connected with the conception of the cognitive relation as a relation between two determinate entities, one being distinguished from the other by its peculiar attribute or quality. When this mechanical notion is uncritically accepted, the result is behaviourism, vitalism, pragmatism, voluntarism or some other so-far-nameless theories which may identify the self with mind, attention, reason or intellect. And so long as the mechanical conception of the knowledge situation is not abandoned, it matters little which of these pseudo-egos is favoured by a

particular thinker, for, the decentralization is complete in any case, and decentralization has implicit in it the germ of materialism. But once the decentralization is there, it has the advantage of effectively disguising the real difficulties of self-consciousness, for then we may be said to know the self in the same way as we know, say, a chair or a table. But the price of the easy victory has always to be paid dearly. For, the mechanical theory has implicit in it the awkward *regressus ad infinitum* which comes to the surface as soon as the real question is rightly put. When A knows B, each of which has its peculiar property, they must first be distinguished by a self which on that very account cannot be identified with one of the distincts. This latter self, again, being itself a distinct entity, must require another self, for which it exists, and so on *ad infinitum*. Thus the birth of an indefinite number of selves or an infinite series of *anurvyavasāyas* has been rightly considered as one of the unanswerable objections to the mechanical theory of knowledge. It might almost be called the hard rock on which every such theory must ultimately be wrecked.

The reason, however, why even an accomplished thinker has to succumb to the simplicity of the mechanical theory of knowledge is that while offering an analysis of knowledge he unwittingly drops himself out of sight and so fails to recognise the

unique relation in which he himself stands to the entities which, according to him, are present in the knowledge situation as a whole. When, for instance, knowledge is reduced to a peculiar characteristic of the total process from stimulus to reaction, or when the self is described as the casual nexus among a series of events, it is entirely forgotten that the stimulus, the reaction or the events are intelligible only in so far as his own relation to them is not reducible to any of the relations that may obtain between the stimulus and the reaction, and in so far as he himself is not the <sup>causal</sup> ~~(casual)~~ nexus of events. All these things are intelligible entities for him, because they conform to the general conditions of objectivity, and because his own relation to them is different from any inter-objective relation.

\* The nature of the unique relation between the subject and the object, as well as the fundamental defect of identifying the relation of an object to its transcendental conditions with an inter-objective relation, may be shown in another way, as a transition to the transcendental method of solving the egocentric paradox. Self-consistency is the first condition of conceivability, and every conceivable object, therefore, must be a self-consistent unity. But the relation of the object A, for instance, to the law of consistency is certainly not identical with the relation of A to B. Unity is the basis, the very life-

blood, of both A and B, as of every other determinate thing. Consequently, the law which is the common basis of A as well as B is related to them in a way entirely different from that in which A is related to B. The former, in fact, is the unique relation of the universal to the particular, as distinct from any relation between two particulars. Hence the empiricist's reduction of knowledge to the relation of compresence between the mental acts and the objects is bound to be inadequate in the long run, and he misses the universal simply because it is not known in the same way as the particular. The experimental method which is deified by him may yield empirical generalizations, but what precisely it cannot give him is the true universal. Yet, without the universal the inductive methods of generalization lose all their meaning, and consequently every attempt to derive the transcendental conditions of knowledge by the inductive method, as in the case of Hume or Mill, is vitiated by *hysteron proteron*.

If the method of discovering the transcendental conditions of knowledge be called the method of transcendental analysis or logical reflexion as distinct from the inductive or experimental method, then these contentions may be summarised as follows. The universal conditions of experience being the basis of all objects that may stand as the subject of significant judgments, they are related to the objects

in a different way from that in which objects are related *inter se*. And the inductive method which is the source of our knowledge of the particular is, for that very reason, not competent to establish the universal logical implicates of knowledge, though its own success depends upon the universality of these very logical principles which it fails to establish. These principles, therefore, are discovered through transcendental analysis of the nature of knowledge, and their universality is proved by the *hysteron proteron* which vitiates every attempt to derive them from experience.

If, then, the experimental method has to be definitely abandoned in discovering the universal logical implicates of knowledge, its bankruptcy is likely to be more pronounced in knowing the ultimate transcendental basis of knowledge, namely, the self, for which exist not only the things but even their logical implicates. This leads us naturally to the views of the transcendentalist or idealist whose distinction between the inductive method and transcendental analysis is a very valuable philosophical achievement. The self being the deepest of the conditions of objectivity, the surest way of missing it is to look for it in the wrong direction. Even the logical implicates of experience,—namely, space, time, unity, causality, reciprocity, etc.—are not known in the same way as that in which a particular

thing is known. But from the fact that these universal forms of knowledge or experience are not known in the same way as we know, say, a colour or a sound, the stimulus or the reaction, it does not follow that they are not known at all, what does follow is that they cannot be known in the same way as we know the particular facts which are laid out according to these universal forms. In other words, the logical implicates are the ultimate forms of thought and existence, and, though unknowable inductively or experimentally, are yet known through transcendental reflexion, and, though abstractions apart from matter, they are still the life-blood of concrete things which are always *formed* matters.

So much being granted, we must consider how these contentions bear on the problem of self-consciousness. Existence-for-self, as already urged, is the highest form of objective existence, nothing can exist for me which I cannot conceive as existing. In this sense, idea and image, reflex arc and libido, tree and table, quite as much as space and time, unity and causality, end and means, phenomenon and noumenon, must all exist for the self, which on that very account is the centre of the universe. From this, however, the transcendentalist has drawn the conclusion that self-consciousness is the highest category of thought and existence. If it be granted that existence-for-self is the highest *a priori* form,

and if it be further granted that forms are known through transcendental reflexion, though not through the inductive method, it must, he urges, be also granted that the self is known through the same method which yields knowledge of the other universal forms of existence. Post-Kantian Idealism has, thus, sought to solve the ego-centric paradox in a way entirely different from that of empiricism and realism, and the idealistic solution of the paradox stands to this day as the most satisfactory account of self-knowledge. It has staunch advocates not only in England where Hegelianism has come to establish itself as a permanent philosophical tendency, but it is accepted as final also by many accomplished thinkers of contemporary Italy and India, where Hegelianism has very recently penetrated and is still seeking a lodgment.

In commenting on the transcendentalist's theory of self, we must begin by emphasising the value of a number of permanent contributions he has made to the understanding of the place of the self in knowledge. These consist mainly in showing that the self is not a substance having knowledge as a property, that knowledge cannot be understood in terms of something other than itself, that all distinctions are within knowledge, that the subject-object relation is unique and is the presupposition of all other relations between objects and objects. These are some



of the main principles which form the core of his insight obtained by a penetrating and strictly logical analysis of knowledge, and it is only when this valuable insight is distorted under the influence of extra-logical considerations that he forgets the results of an unbiassed analysis. And in proportion to the violence done to the logical insight, he makes himself liable to the same fallacy of decentralization of the ego which he has done so much to expose. The self, according to the transcendentalist, exists as one self only as it opposes itself as object, to itself as subject, and yet transcends that opposition. In this sense, the self is a concrete unity, a dual unity, ~~of~~ a restored unity, or, again, a transparent identity-in-difference. and the puzzle of self-consciousness, it is held, is due to our tendency to separate identity from difference. Now, the question that we venture to raise at this place is whether this is a real solution of the ego-centric paradox. That unity-in-difference is the highest form to which every conceivable object of thought must conform may be true, but this by itself does not show that the subject for which such a form exists is itself a unity-in-difference, in other words, even the distinction between form and matter presupposes the subject which, therefore, cannot be identified with one of the distincts. To do so would be to contradict the principle that the self is the pre-supposition of all objects of thought or that all dis-

tinctions are within knowledge. Again, even supposing that the self is a unity-in-difference, it flatly contradicts the assertion that the subject is not a substance, for, such a self <sup>has</sup> ~~as~~ at least the property of being a dual unity as distinct from an undifferentiated or unrestored unity and so far it is analogous to the stone, though the latter has another distinguishing attribute, namely, weight. The fact is that nothing which exists by opposing itself to something other than itself can be identified with the central ego for which exist all opposites and all distincts, and which, therefore, is not to be confused with one of them.

That the categories, howsoever different from the things which they condition, are still objects for a subject follows from the centrality of the ego, and it is as illogical to identify the self with a category as to identify it with the nervous system or with the psychological complexes. Yet, the identification of the self with the category of unity has been the source of the strength as well as the weakness of the transcendental theories of self-consciousness. The self has been openly claimed to be a logical form by Bonatelli and Varisco of Italy, and in so far as the British Neo-Hegelians are concerned, there seems to be some truth in Pringle-Pattison's remark that they give us the logical ideal in place of a real self. It need not, however, be denied that there is a sense in which

self-consciousness is a mediated unity, that is, the consciousness of the self and that of the not-self are correlative with each other, in so far as it is only in relation to the object determined as the not-self that I am conscious of myself. But our contention is that when the self is thus determined in relation to the not-self, it is just one thing among other things and not the central self for which exist all things and all distinctions between things. And it is very significant that even Bosanquet is compelled by these considerations to reject the finality of the idea of subject in so far as it implies the subject-object relation. In fact, such a determined self as is implied in mediated self-consciousness cannot be anything more than what James Ward calls the spiritual self which is but one of the many presentations, and not the self to whom is presented the sensory, the ideational, the personal, or the spiritual self. It is, to adopt a very significant expression of Stout, only one of the presentational doubles or wrappings which mask the real self.

There are, however, transcendentalists who, unlike E. Caird or Dr. Haldar, appear to have kept more consistently to the centrality of the ego than to the Hegelian tradition. Green's genius, for instance, though nurtured in the transcendental school of Oxford, made a desperate attempt to rise above the shortcomings, or rather the backslidings, of

British Neo-Hegelianism. *That* the self exists as the basis of all objects of knowledge is certain, but *what* it is positively cannot be known; the only knowledge we have of the self is negative and, therefore, according to Green, the relations by which, through its action, phenomena are determined are not relations *of* it—not relations by which it is itself determined. Thus while Caird conceives the self as a unity of differences and as a circle of relations in itself, Green is led to describe it as a principle of union which is not one or any number of the relations. Again, while Caird accuses Kant of not seeing the absurdity of the supposition that the synthesis by which the self becomes conscious of itself as an object at the same time hides it from itself, Green accuses Locke of making the absurd attempt to know that which renders knowledge possible as he might know any other object. Thus, Caird saves his theory of a knowable self by decentralizing the ego, but Green attempts to stick to the centrality of the ego and is inevitably landed in agnosticism in so far as the self is concerned. And Caird did not fail to see and deplore this difference between his own position and that of his friend.

In fact, that an unbiassed analysis of knowledge in accordance with the transcendental method must lead to some sort of agnosticism in regard to the self has been clearly seen by Green's critics.

The ego in this theory reduces itself to what Balfour calls the bare geometrical point

Similarly, Bonucci detects agnosticism in Gentile's theory of self as the subject; Stout finds the pure ego of Ward reducing itself to an empty form, and Pringle-Pattison rightly finds Green's ego to be the dot on the 'i'. What this agnosticism teaches is not that we can lay down logic, as the critics have suggested, for to do so would be to substitute dogmatism and blind faith for philosophy. But what it does teach is that the ego-centric paradox is yet to be resolved.

Thus, the real problem of self-consciousness or self-knowledge remains unsolved to the present day. The inductive or psychological method has inevitably led to the decentralization of the self which is wrongly identified with one of the pseudo-egos on the periphery; and the result is that those who have pledged themselves to the inductive method do not even see that there is a problem of self-consciousness at all. The transcendental method, on the other hand, leads, by an inner logic, to the theory of self as a *focus imaginarius*, and in so far as the transcendentalist has succeeded in avoiding this legitimate conclusion from the centrality of the ego which he accepts ungrudgingly, he has done so only by committing the same fallacy which he has himself done so much to explode in the psychological theories. If, then, both

the methods have failed in resolving the ego-centric paradox, a third method is the crying need of modern philosophy.

But, before we start on an exposition of this new method of approach, a somewhat detailed examination of the two current methods, attempted in the two following chapters, will be useful for a correct appreciation of their merits as well as of the crucial points on which they appear to break down.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY

The doctrine that the Self, the existence of which none can seriously doubt, is yet essentially unknowable through the ordinary avenues of knowledge is as old as the Upaniṣads. The puzzle was started by Yājñavalkya, the distinguished teacher of the early 'Vedānta' absolutism, in his famous dialogues with Maitreyī and Gārgī. That through which everything is known, he urged, cannot itself be made an object of knowledge, none can know the knower (*yenedam sarvam vijānāti tam kena vijānīyāt vijñātāram are kena vijānīyāt—Brh Up, II 4 14, III 8 11*). The puzzle has remained ingrained in the Vedānta philosophy of a later age, and has found in Śaṅkara one of its most powerful exponents. In the history of Western thought, a strikingly similar doctrine has been the upshot of Kant's critical analysis of knowledge. Kant's relentless criticism of rational psychology for its erroneous application of the categories to the transcendental ego brought out the puzzle of self-knowledge in a manner which is strongly reminiscent of the thoughts of Yājñavalkya and Śaṅkara. As nothing can be an object of knowledge without the application of the cate-

gories, and as the self is the source of all the categories of knowledge, reason is committed to an awkward pass in its attempt to know the knower which, therefore, can best be represented by the X.

This peculiar agnosticism has naturally elicited vehement criticism, both in the East and the West, yet, there seems to be a remarkably smooth passage of thought from the premises to the agnostic conclusion. From the admission that the self is the ultimate presupposition of everything known and knowable, that it is the universal centre to which all that can be known as existing has a necessary reference, it seems to follow naturally that the transcendental ego cannot be an object of knowledge except through a process of logical decentralization which places the ego somewhere on the periphery. Indeed, those who have accepted the premises and yet denied the conclusion appear to have been influenced more by a sentimental horror of agnosticism rather than by the logical cogency of arguments, the result being that while the logic of the situation tends towards some sort of agnosticism in respect of the nature of the self, this agnosticism itself is made the basis of the logical inadequacy of the initial analysis. In other words, it is first assumed by the critics that the self cannot be a featureless X, and then various methods are devised to reconcile this assumption with



their respective theories of knowledge, and, as a consequence, the reconciliation becomes more or less strained and artificial according as the theory of knowledge is more or less precise and true.

The truth of these observations will be verified in due course. In the meantime, we may suggest that there is an important element of truth in the contention that the self, when rightly seen in the light of its place in knowledge, points beyond itself as a definable entity, hence some sort of agnosticism must be a necessary accompaniment of every theory of self that can successfully avoid the confusion of the self as the knowing subject with one of the objects which the self knows. This fatal confusion, according to Kant and Śaṅkara, is natural, it is a transcendental illusion, as the former names it, or an '*adhyāsa*,' as put by the latter. And if it can be shown that every theory that has so far denied the alleged mystery of self-consciousness and defended the knowability of the self has done so only by confusing, either consciously or unconsciously, the transcendental ego with one of the objects of knowledge, it will at least help us to appreciate the difficulties which, according to Kant and Śaṅkara, are present in the problem of self-knowledge. The Pure Ego, the innermost subject, however, should be, for this purpose, carefully distinguished from those objects with which it is generally confused, namely, the body,

the mind, the sense-organs, etc., which may be called, following the Indian tradition, the '*koṣas*,' or, following James Ward's terminology, the objective zones. When, on the other hand, the distinction is overlooked or repudiated, we get either epiphenomenalism, or behaviourism or any other disguised form of materialism which may make its appearance in the history of thought due to the ruling conception of the age. Or, again, the confusion may lead to the theory of spiritual or mental atoms. In either case, the position of the ego remains unaltered in so far as the subject is identified with an object.

Now, confining ourselves to the history of Western philosophy, the difficulties in self-knowledge have been challenged from two different directions. Some have altogether rejected the Kantian distinction between the self as subject and the self as a substance. And having once identified the self with the brain or the nervous system, or the mind, they have no difficulty in showing that the self has nothing mysterious about it. On the other hand, those who accept the Kantian distinction as true have been equally led to doubt the existence of an insoluble difficulty in the way of self-knowledge. The self, they urge, is like the light which illumines itself as well as the objects it knows. We may call the former attitude as predominantly psychological as it looks upon know-

ledge as a relation between two entities one of which is called the self. The latter attitude, on the other hand, is predominantly epistemological in so far as it refuses to reduce the self in knowledge to one of the things known. Despite this internal incompatibility between these two attitudes, however, they have presented a united front to the agnostic theory of self. If, however, it happens to be true that agnosticism is the inevitable result of the assumption that Reality is restricted to the world of definable objects, then, it will follow that every theory of self which refuses to see any inexplicable mystery in self-knowledge, while keeping the assumption unchallenged, must do so by an unconscious identification of the transcendental ego with one of the objects or things.

For an adequate appreciation of the psychological approach to the problem of knowledge, we may turn to James Ward's analysis of experience, for, he was one of those great minds in whom the philosophical sciences of the end of the last century made a lasting impression, but were not able to clog their speculative insight. And if it can be shown that Ward, despite his rejection of atomism and presentationism, could not entirely free himself from the glamour of empiricism which led him into difficulties peculiar to presentationism, that circumstance by itself may be taken as a strong ground for the presumption that the greatest

thinker is bound to fall into confusions when he tries to trace knowledge to something beyond thought and self-consciousness

James Ward's theory of experience, though not entirely original, has the unique merit of presenting the facts with that freshness of outlook and wealth of details which can come only from an intimate acquaintance with the different departments of knowledge combined with acuteness of thought, and desire for thoroughness. As an accomplished scholar, he never fails to inspire confidence even when his reader finds it difficult to follow him. Moreover, his analysis touches upon a number of very important problems which are still in the forefront of philosophical discussions of the day, and thus affords the reader an opportunity to concentrate on the main currents of contemporary thought without the trouble of an actual wading through the multifarious currents. We select here for consideration his contribution to the theory of knowledge and even with regard to this we shall restrict ourselves to some of the most outstanding features of that theory, particularly to those which offer a strong contrast with what is generally known as the idealistic analysis of experience. The importance of such an undertaking can hardly be exaggerated. For, despite the strong tincture of idealism with which Ward's position in general is imbued, there are very significant differences between his analysis and

that of the idealists, and so one of them must ultimately be abandoned as false

Experience, for Ward, is a term which includes "all that we know and feel and do, all our facts and theories, all our emotions and ideals and ends."<sup>1</sup> The most persistent feature of experience in this sense is its duality as distinct from the dualism of matter and mind. The duality of subject and object characterizes experience at all the different stages through which it passes, and the most important point in the development of experience is reached with the dawn of self-consciousness. Epistemologists, according to Ward, have been almost always guilty of ignoring what psychological analysis has proved beyond the shadow of a doubt, namely, that there are "successive stages in the advance from the one level of experience or knowledge to the other."<sup>2</sup> Much confusion has arisen from not recognizing that "both reflexion and reasoning are the result of social intercourse, the gradual development of which has produced this gulf between man and brute." Once it is assumed that "each man by himself is rational instead of recognizing that humanity has achieved rationality," the result is a fatal confusion of psychology with epistemology. "Our human perception, or intuition of

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<sup>1</sup> *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, II, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> *Psychological Principles*, 2nd edition, p. 32.

things as expressed in language," it is urged in another connection, "is, of course, for us the nearest, the highest and the clearest." But, unfortunately, "epistemology has not merely started from the human level as it must : but it has tended to assume that this intellectual level is where knowledge itself begins."<sup>3</sup> One of the fatal consequences of this confusion is to be found in the extremely loose way in which the terms 'subjective' and 'objective' are used in epistemological treatises. What is epistemologically subjective is erroneously regarded as psychologically subjective as well, and that which is psychologically objective is also supposed to be epistemologically objective. And thus arise all the difficulties of dualism and external perception.

Psychology may avoid these confusions, Ward thinks, by clearly distinguishing between individual experience and universal experience. From its individualistic standpoint, it can show how experience at all the different levels of its development involves a relation between a knowing, feeling and active subject on the one hand, and an object on the other; and how universal experience "has grown out of, depends upon, and is really but an extension of, our primary, individual, concrete experience."<sup>4</sup> This distinction

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<sup>3</sup> *Mind*, XXVIII, 1919, p. 268

<sup>4</sup> *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, II, p. 153.

between the concrete experience of a given individual and that experience which is the result of inter-subjective intercourse "systematized and formulated by means of abstract conceptions" is at the root of the dualism of commonsense and science. But dualism can effectively be refuted by showing that conceptual experience is preceded by a type of experience in which conceptions do not figure at all, and that the trans-subjective object, far from being independent of the subjects that know it, is "rather what is common to the objects of the separate individual knowers"<sup>5</sup>

It is not necessary for our present purpose to reproduce all the arguments by which Ward seeks to establish his position outlined above, nor need we question the validity of his description of the different stages through which individual experience develops into something like an over-individual experience. The criticisms his theory has evoked in its psychological aspects—that is, as a true description of the development of individual experience as it is for the experiencing individual—are well known. But there are some very important epistemological issues involved in Ward's theory of experience, and if his contentions be true, then it is time that we should revise our attitude to certain conclusions which have so far been accepted as indubitable verities in the field

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid* , p. 155.

of epistemology. To these then we turn. And we may conveniently begin with the consideration of the individualistic standpoint which is thought to be the peculiar standpoint of psychology.

"Of all the facts with which he deals," it has been urged by Ward, "the psychologist may truly say that their *esse* is *percipi*, in so far as such facts are facts of presentation, are ideas in Locke's sense, or objects which imply a subject. Psychology, then, never transcends the limits of the individual."<sup>6</sup> Hence Psychology may quite adequately be defined as the science of individual experience. But though in this sense, 'the whole choir of heaven and furniture of earth' may belong to psychology, yet psychology cannot ignore the difference between "the standpoint of a given experience and the standpoint of its exposition,"<sup>7</sup> or, as Ward himself explains, it should not interpret the conduct of children as if they were already 'grown-up' persons.<sup>8</sup> That is, the psychologist's business is to give a systematic account of experience as it grows from one stage to another in the life-history of an individual without confusing his own standpoint with that of the experient who actually owns the experience which passes through different

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<sup>6</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 27

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 48.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 82.



stages of development Now, the first question that naturally suggests itself here is how is it possible for the psychologist to abandon his own standpoint and place himself in the position of a less developed mind in order to give a faithful representation of the world as it is presented to it? This question, it may be seen, is not trivial, and Ward has to raise it and offer an explanation "The infant," he says, "who is delighted by a bright colour does not of course conceive himself as face to face with an object, but neither does he conceive the colour as a subjective affection " And the reason evidently is that conception or, as Ward elsewhere says, experience in which concepts figure is preceded by experience in which they do not Yet, in dealing with the infant's experience the psychologist "is bound to describe his state of mind truthfully," and this according to Ward can be very well done without "abandoning terms which have no counterpart in his consciousness," because "these terms are only used to depict that consciousness to us " This explanation, however, does not seem to remove the difficulty If the psychologist has to give a faithful description of the child's mind when it is face to face with the bright colour, he must not introduce into his description such terms as have a meaning only for those who have reached a higher stage of development Because, in that case, the description is not of the child's mind whatever else it

might be. The psychologist, therefore, seems to be between the horns of a dilemma. He must either stick to his own standpoint or abandon it. In the former case, he commits the 'psychologist's fallacy', while in the other case, he may be faithful to the facts but he does it at the expense of intelligibility.

Ward appears very often to prefer the latter alternative and insists on the essential unintelligibility of the lower forms of experience. Thus, to take one clear instance, the lizard's immediate experience of sunshine and warm stone occurring together, it is said, does not strictly admit of statement; yet, universal experience is "only an elaboration, though a most important elaboration" of the perceptual experience of the lizard.<sup>9</sup> This impossibility of stating clearly the lizard's experience as it is for the lizard, it may be replied, is due to the absence of those distinctions in perceptual experience which exist only at a higher stage. But this admission, taken strictly, is not compatible with Ward's conception of development as an epigenesis. We shall illustrate our point by reference to an interpretation of Ward's position given by Dawes Hicks in another connection. In explaining Ward's theory of the pure ego, and defending Ward's position against the suspicion that he was reviving the

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<sup>9</sup> *Agnosticism and Naturalism*, p. 184

spiritualistic theory of a soul-substance, Prof. Dawes Hicks says that "wherever we have a state or mode of consciousness, there we have what may otherwise be called, using Lotze's terminology, a mode of 'being for self,' a mode of self-expression on the part of a subject that in and through such act is in some measure and to some degree aware of, or experiencing, itself. The awareness in question may be confused and indefinite to any extent, it may be no more than the first dim obscure stirrings of feeling; but the point is it is always there, and were it not, the gradual development of self-consciousness would be inexplicable."<sup>10</sup> This interpretation, we believe, may fairly be taken as a criticism of Ward's own position. If there is anything that Ward is most anxious to defend, it is this that self-consciousness is the latest stage in the development of experience, and that this development is an epigenesis. On the other hand, Dawes Hicks seeks to read into Ward's theory a conception of development which essentially consists in a process from the implicit to the explicit, from the potential to the actual. But to say that what is logically implicated is unconsciously involved in the former stage is, according to Ward, "bad psychology and assumes a scientifically unwarranted and unworkable use of the notion of

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<sup>10</sup> *Mind*, XXX, 1921, p. 5.

potentiality,"<sup>11</sup> and so development must lead to the emergence of new factors that did not exist in the prior stage

The point we have raised is too important to be ignored completely or treated lightly. Once it is made clear that it is only from the standpoint of the psychologist that the individual experience is intelligible, the hard and fast line by which Ward seeks to distinguish sense-knowledge from thought-knowledge, or experience in which concepts figure and that in which they do not, disappears, and we are landed in some such theory as that which Green, for example, expounded when he said that "a natural history of self-consciousness, and of the conceptions by which it makes the world its own, is impossible"<sup>12</sup>

It is, however, well known that Ward's account of the relation of the trans-subjective stage to the previous stage of individual experience has been thought to be unsatisfactory even by such a sympathetic critic as G F Stout "If thought first arises," it is said, "after previous stages which can be accounted for without it, it emerges as a radically new faculty - there is a breach of continuity. But if we examine critically Ward's treatment of the development of the individual percipient prior to the beginning of the trans-subjective stage, we find

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<sup>11</sup> *Mind*, XXVIII, p 263

<sup>12</sup> *Works*, I, p. 166

that it already involves in manifold ways thought as well as sense "<sup>13</sup> Now, we do not desire to consider the purely psychological question here Whether, as a matter of historical fact, a given individual below the trans-subjective level has in its experience, in however crude a form, both sense and thought, it is for the psychologist to ascertain Nor do we propose to consider the value of the psychological question for epistemology But supposing that there is an experience which forms the subject-matter of investigation, then the question we raise is whether it is possible for the psychologist to give up his own standpoint, even when the experiencing subject whose experience he investigates stands at a lower level of development Let us clear up the problem by means of an example A psychologist, say, is required to give a faithful description of a flower as it is for an experient below the trans-subjective stage The psychologist, being already at the trans-subjective level, knows the flower to be a unitary existence as distinct from other similar existing things of the world with some of which it is related spatially, temporally and causally And his knowledge of the flower is more or less adequate accordingly as he is a physiologist or a botanist. On the other hand, the experient whose experience he

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<sup>13</sup> *The Monist*, XXXVI, 1926, p 41

describes knows nothing of all these relations through which the psychologist knows it. Being at the sub-reflective level, the psychological subject cannot evidently have that type of knowledge of the flower which implies identification and differentiation, causal connection and spatio-temporal relations. The question then is if it is possible for the psychologist to describe the flower as it is for the psychological individual. To do so, the psychologist must be able to strip the flower of all those relations through which he knows it, and thus reduce it to something which is, in the Kantian phrase, as good as nothing for him. But if he is not to commit the "psychologist's fallacy" he must describe the flower without introducing into his description any of the relations through which alone he knows it.

In the light of these considerations, we can easily realize the appalling responsibility that is thrown on the shoulder of the psychologist, when he is constantly warned against the psychologist's fallacy, and yet asked to do the miracle of describing individual experience from the standpoint of the experiencing individual. Ward, as we have seen above, avoids this perplexity, nay, evident absurdity, by saying that when in a psychological description the term sensation, for instance, is used, it is simply meant to describe to us the individual's state of mind. But a student of Kant might similarly urge

that the category of causality, though not applicable to the 'thing-in-itself,' is used in order to describe it to us. But any one would hardly accept the reality of the thing-in-itself on the ground on which Ward asks his reader to believe in a pre-intellectual or anoetic stage of mental development. Let us then turn to the description which Ward as a psychologist offers of individual experience below the trans-subjective level.

Psychologists, it is said, "have usually represented mental advance as consisting fundamentally in the combination and recombination of various elementary units, the so-called sensations and primitive movements, in other words, as consisting in a species of 'mental chemistry.' If needful, we might find in biology far better analogies to the progressive differentiation of experience than in the physical upbuilding of molecules."<sup>14</sup> Even in higher minds, a presentation is still part of a larger whole, and "working backwards from this, as we find it now, we are led alike by particular facts and general considerations to the conception of a *totum objectivum* or objective continuum which is gradually differentiated." In many places, however, in our account of this process of differentiation, it is further said, the "only evidence apparently to which we can

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<sup>14</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 76

safely appeal in this enquiry is that furnished by biology"<sup>15</sup> And the reason apparently is that the processes in many cases "have now proceeded so far that at the level of human consciousness we find it hard to form any tolerable clear conception"<sup>16</sup> of the lower forms of experience But in spite of these difficulties, it is believed that we can conceive individual experience which involves the duality of subject and object. the subject confronted with a partially differentiated sensori-motor continuum But here we are on the other horn of the dilemma, and the problem is how can we describe such an experience from the standpoint of the experiencing individual? From the standpoint of the psychologist who stands at the intellectual level, it is of course possible, on the analogy of biological development, to conceive, though with difficulty, what the psychological individual might be But that does not explain what its experience is for itself The experient, for example, cannot know the objective continuum *as such*, because that would involve all those fundamental relations which, according to Ward, are much later attainments

The only plausible answer to the question we have raised is perhaps to be found in the distinction,

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid* , p. 108.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid* , p 79.



which Ward insists on in different contexts, between sense-knowledge and thought-knowledge. Thus, for instance, in opposition to Green's dictum that a consistent sensationalism must be speechless, Ward urges that "though sense is speechless, it is not 'senseless'"<sup>17</sup> That is, if we understand Ward aright, epistemologists have been led to deny the non-intellectual type of knowledge on account of their pre-occupation with man at the intellectual level. But though it is true that "our human perception, or intuition of things as expressed in language is, of course, for us the nearest, the highest and the clearest," yet, it is not equally true that knowledge begins only at the intellectual level. In this respect "formal logic and sensationalist psychology have been but blind leaders of the blind. Language, which has enabled thought to advance to the level at which reflexion about thought can begin, is now an obstacle in the way of a thorough analysis of it"<sup>18</sup> But anoetic consciousness, whether or no it actually exists, "is a conceivable limit, and has the theoretical usefulness of limiting conceptions generally"<sup>19</sup> Considered in this light, the experiment at the sub-intellectual level has, it will be main-

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<sup>17</sup> *Mind*, XXVIII, p. 259

<sup>18</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 313

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 317.

tained, sense-knowledge of the sensori-motor continuum, and though it cannot translate its knowledge into the thought-form, yet that does not detract from the concreteness and immediacy of its non-intellectual knowledge. Far from being 'nothing,' individual experience is the primary, concrete experience, and even when the intellectual level has been attained, it is this concrete experience which provides the necessary content, the *fundamenta*, for the relating activity of the intellect. Taken by itself, this content does not give rational knowledge, and cannot explain rational experience. But "without this content the universal and necessary factors" that enter into rational experience "lapse into empty form, become as incapable of yielding experience as empty dies of minting coin" <sup>20</sup>

The answer outlined above, though not explicitly formulated by Ward, is strongly suggested by the uncompromising rigour with which he pursues the distinction between sense-knowledge and rational knowledge. We do not intend to repeat here the contentions we elaborated elsewhere about the distinction in question, but assuming the essential validity of the distinction in our experience, we ask whether on the basis of a distinction in self-conscious experience, it is possible to describe the experience

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\* <sup>20</sup> *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, II, p. 184.

of an individual below the level of self-consciousness—an individual that is *ex hypothesi* precluded from any knowledge that implies the power to distinguish. Such an individual, restricted to the enjoyment of its immediate experience, would know nothing of the distinctions that we make between subject and object, cognition and conation, thought and feeling. Its experience *for itself* would be, to borrow Ward's phrase, a matter of being rather than of knowing. And if such beings exist at all, in what sense can we describe its experience as involving the duality of subject and object which has been accepted as the universal feature of experience? It is of course not denied that an individual may feel without knowing that it feels, there is the whole difference here between consciousness and self-consciousness. Similarly, it is not denied that the subject-object relation may be involved in an experience, though the experient knows nothing of that relation, but, then, in describing such an experience, the psychologist is not describing it as it is for the experient, and thus committing the fallacy against which he is repeatedly asked to guard himself.

The essential correctness of our contentions is implied in the explanation which Stout offers of the psychologist's fallacy. Though the psychologist is required "to give a coherent and truthful account of the development of individual experience

as it is for the experiencing individual," yet, it is admitted, "there is an essential difference between this experience itself and what the psychologist knows and seeks to know about it. His standpoint and outlook cannot be identical with those of the individual he is studying. Otherwise, in order to study a baby's mind he must himself become a baby and so cease to be a psychologist. No data, conceptions, distinctions, hypotheses are illegitimate in psychology, if and so far as they help relevantly to answer properly psychological questions.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Ward seems to suggest, in some places of his psychological account of experience, that the psychologist may give a truthful account of immediate experience even when he describes it only from his own standpoint. Thus, for instance, he admits a plurality of properties in a sensation while denying its complexity, on the ground that the psychologist can reflectively make an analysis and find out a plurality of constituents in an experience, though such an analysis is not possible for the subject of that experience. To deny this, it is said, it to overlook the difference between a psychological and a psychical analysis.<sup>22</sup> But it is not at all clear in

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<sup>21</sup> *The Monist*, XXXVI, 1920, p. 27.

<sup>22</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 105

what sense this psychological analysis is then an analysis of experience as it is for the experiencing individual. Does it not clearly show that it is necessary for the psychologist often to view the experience he is investigating, not from the standpoint of the experiencing individual, but from that of his own? Is it not then mere sophistry, however cleverly concealed by terminological distinctions, to deny that psychology studies individual experience not necessarily from within but *ab extra*? The fact is that our knowledge of a thing or event cannot be adequate except in terms of self-conscious experience, and when therefore that event or thing is *ex hypothesi* of a nature different from what can be realized in self-consciousness, there can be no knowledge. The conditions of knowledge being absent, that thing remains inaccessible and inscrutable. And the reason is that the conditions of self-consciousness are really the conditions of knowledge.

We may then summarize this portion of our contentions as follows. The psychologist's fallacy, as explained by our eminent psychologists, far from being a defect to be removed from psychological descriptions, enters necessarily into all intelligible description of facts. In describing and explaining mental events, in tracing the development of experience from one stage to another, or in analysing a complex psychosis into its constituent elements, the psycho-

logist can as little lay aside his intellectual mechanism as a mason can put away his tool in building an edifice. And the demand that a psychologist should guard himself against the psychologist's fallacy and describe individual experience from the standpoint of the experiencing individual is as impossible to meet as the demand that he should describe the indescribable or think of the unthinkable. This of course does not mean that a genetic study of mental facts is foredoomed to failure. On the contrary, the genetic method, we believe, has been of immense value in psychology as much as in other departments of knowledge. Its special fitness for the study of mind lies in the simple fact that mind is essentially a process, a growth. But it is equally important to remember that in following the mind through the different stages of its development, the psychologist has to reconstruct its process, and is, therefore, inevitably bound down by the conditions of reconstruction. No knowledge, specially no knowledge of the past, is possible except through a constructive activity on the part of the knower. That the past is not immediately given, but has to be constructed out of what is given, ought to be now a commonplace of philosophy. And then it follows that the psychologist in tracing the growth of mind must of necessity construct or, say, reconstruct the past history of the mental evolution. And from this it follows

further that what defies reconstruction cannot be described in intelligible terms. ·

What prevents Ward from clearly realizing this truth is perhaps his pre-occupation with biological concepts. Having rightly insisted on the duality, as distinct from the dualism, of experience, he has no difficulty in exposing the shortcomings of mechanical and chemical categories in the description of mind and mental evolution. But he still continues to represent the subject-object relation as something like the relation between the organism and its environment. The subject with the capacity to feel and act, and armed with the single power of attention, is represented as confronting a sensori-motor continuum, almost in the same way in which an organism is confronted with its environment. It is true that the essential distinction between these two types of relation is sometimes recognized, and then it is said that experience is life as it is for the living individual, and not like the "interaction of organism and environment with which the so-called biologist is exclusively concerned, and where both organism and environment are objects for a distinct observer" <sup>23</sup>. And then it is rightly urged that in respect of the subject-object relation, as the absolutely ultimate

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<sup>23</sup> *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, II, p. 111

relation within experience "we can either say that it is inexplicable, or that it needs no explanation, or we may entertain the notion of an absolute, in whom the unity of experience outlasts the duality"<sup>24</sup> These alternative courses, however, are not followed by Ward. They are, according to him, preferable courses in comparison with that which brings the subject-object relation under the category of cause and effect. Experience, Ward seems to think, vouchsafes only interaction, and not causal relation between subject and object. "Given a subject, or centre of experience, and such an objective complement, then the most salient feature is their interaction, the feelings that objective changes induce in the subject, and the actions to which such feeling leads"<sup>25</sup> Now, interaction is essentially a biological category, and it is difficult to see how, in spite of its superiority to the category of cause and effect, it can effectively disarm the force of the criticism which Ward has brought to bear upon the cause-effect category as representing the subject-object relation. If the subject-object relation is presupposed by and therefore not explicable in terms of cause and effect, is it any the more explicable under the category of inter-

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p 117.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p 125.



action? Does not the latter category presuppose as much the subject-object relation as the former?

The fact seems to be that Ward has not done sufficient justice to his insight that the subject-object relation is ultimate. Being under the fascinating influence of a new fruitful discovery, he was naturally blind to its limitations, and so fondly clung to the biological category of interaction in explaining not only what was imperfectly explained by the mechanical and the chemical categories, but in explaining even that ultimate relation which is presupposed by every specific relation within experience. While rightly discovering the absurdity of identifying the subject of experience with the organism "which is but a special object among others,"<sup>26</sup> while realizing that it would be "a mistake to seek to explain the individuality of the psychological subject by reference to the individuality of the organism,"<sup>27</sup> and lastly, while detecting the fatal ambiguity of the term mind or ego as meaning "the unity or continuity of consciousness," as well as, the subject to which this unity is presented,<sup>28</sup> Ward fails to work out all the implications of his position, mainly on account of a strong biological bias

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid* , p 127

<sup>27</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p 36

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid* , p 39, also p. 423

This brings us once more to the contrast, which Ward is never tired of insisting on, between the standpoint of psychology and that of epistemology, and particularly the contrast of the psychological *a priority* with the epistemological *a priority*. It is one of his repeated warnings that we must not confuse the concept of space-time with the experience of space-time. "That the knowledge of space" he urges "is *a priori* in the epistemological sense it is no concern of the psychologist either to assert or to deny."<sup>29</sup> Now, can we not equally say, reversing Ward's remark, "that the knowledge of space-time is not psychologically *a priori* it is no concern of the epistemologist either to assert or to deny?" So far as the psychological question is concerned Ward's account may be true or, again, it may be false as shown by Stout, who is uncompromising in holding that "this merely sensuous unity is not sufficient" for explaining the growth of the knowledge of external world.<sup>30</sup> But we must recognize, he urges, that from the outset there must be "some germinal apprehension of the unity of the world," and that "such categories as spatial unity, temporal unity, causal unity belong even to rudimentary perceptual consciousness as a condition of its further development."

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p 144

<sup>30</sup> *Manual of Psychology*, 4th edition, p 413.

Nor again are we to decide on the psychological validity of Ward's explanation of space-perception in contrast with that of another eminent psychologist of our time who holds that there can be no perception of space without the constructive activity of mind "to which the sense-stimulations and the qualities of sensory experience that immediately follow upon them are the provocation"<sup>31</sup> From these alternative theories of space-perception, we may, however, see clearly that it is futile to appeal to psychology even of the most modern type in order to expose the defects of Kant's account of space as epistemologically *a priori*

The question that is all-important from the standpoint of knowledge is whether space-time is not involved in any account of the growth of individual experience which passes through different levels of development, and whether the conceived space-time is not objectively real in contradistinction from the 'concrete perceptual' space-time. The objective reality of time as a succession of events, for instance, is presupposed by every psychologist who ventures to give a genetic account of experience, and then it is not in terms of the time *as perceived* but in terms of the time *as conceived* that the genetic account becomes intelligible. The concept may be, as Ward

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<sup>31</sup> McDougall, *Outline of Psychology*, p. 245.

would have us believe, at once *abstract* and *ideal*, but it is in terms of the conceptual time alone and not in terms of the Bergsonian duration, that the gradual and successive development of experience can be understood. Are we then to reject the conceived time as "the pendant of geometry?" Can development be understood except in terms of the "abstract time of science in which we imagine the successive states of the whole phenomenal world to be plotted out?"<sup>32</sup> In fact, however, Ward himself suggests that the real time is what we conceive it to be, and says explicitly that whatever may be our intuition of time, the time as we conceive it is time *as it is*. But if this be granted, then epistemology, far from presupposing psychology, is really presupposed by psychology,<sup>33</sup> and reflection, even if it be something which comes to be at a particular stage of the development of individual experience, is the medium through which alone an objective development is intelligible. In other words, conceptual knowledge is not abstract in the derogatory sense of being something that gives us a partial view of reality or a false view of real things. And it follows also that

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<sup>32</sup> *The Realm of Ends*, p. 305

<sup>33</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 203. Italics in the original. Cf. Stout. Objective time is thus an ideal construction—*Manual of Psychology*, 4th edition, p. 568.

to talk of a correspondence between conceptual knowledge and reality is to court misunderstanding, suggesting as it does a different type of knowledge through which reality exists for us, with which we are to compare our conceptual constructions. If, on the other hand, it is found that even the staunchest critic of conceptual knowledge has to construct in spite of himself and thus assume implicitly the validity of conceptual constructions, this by itself is a transcendental type of proof showing the *a priori* validity of concepts as also the futility of instituting a comparison between conceptual knowledge and reality.

The fact is that concepts, as Kant urged long ago, are rules that unify knowledge and there can be no knowledge without a concept "however indefinite or obscure it may be." And the ultimate source of the conceptual constructions is the subject that knows, call it the pure ego or the transcendental unity of apperception. Now, there is no doubt that Ward too admits in a sense that the experient subject is the source of the real categories of substance and cause, and that "the world is *intelligible* only when it is interpreted in terms of what the experient subject at the trans-subjective and self-conscious level knows itself to be."<sup>34</sup> But then he interprets

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<sup>34</sup> *A Study of Kant*, p. 83

these categories in the anthropomorphic sense and thinks that all Kant meant by the transcendental conditions of knowledge is this that the "permanence and activity of the subject itself are analogically projected,"<sup>35</sup> at the transcendental level of experience. And if this be the upshot of Kant's reply to Hume, then we must agree with the critics of Kant in the remark that Kant's vast transcendental machinery is a signal failure.<sup>36</sup> For, Hume would have surely retorted that "to convince us how fallacious this reasoning is, we need only consider, that the will being here considered as a cause has no more a discoverable connection with its effects than any material cause has with its proper effect."<sup>37</sup> We venture to think, however, that Kant's transcendental conditions of experience are not the anthropomorphic projections at the transcendental level of experience. On the contrary, they are the presuppositions of even the anthropomorphic projections. That is, Kant's reply to Ward would be essentially the same as his reply to Hume. All descriptions of the origin of the categories, he would say in effect, can be intelligible only in terms of the categories themselves, and consequently must be vitiated by "a sort of

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>36</sup> J. H. Stirling's article in *Mind*, 1885.

<sup>37</sup> *Treatise*, I, in *xiv*

*generatio aequivoca*," and this irrespective of the modes in which they are supposed to have originated. Whether the categories are described as having originated from the habits of imagination or from the anthropomorphic projection, the psychologist assumes the universal validity of the causal principle in the logical sense, in so far as he is thinking of the *origin* of the categories as a real fact of the world.

There are certain other aspects of Ward's philosophy in respect of which also he may truly be regarded as the mouth-piece of the spirit of the age, but we are not concerned with them in the present context. We may, however, conclude with a warning against a possible misinterpretation of our criticism of Psychology. Nothing we have so far said is meant to decide on the merits of the competing theories about the psychology of knowledge as it is conceived now. Whether all knowing begins with sensory experience or with experience referred to something beyond itself, it is for the psychologist to discover. Similarly, it is none of our purposes either to defend or to attack the widely respected opinion that, as a matter of history, the self-conscious level has been attained at a particular stage of the psychological individual's development.

All we have attempted to show is that a psychology of knowledge must necessarily presuppose the validity of those ultimate principles which lie at the

basis of thought and existence. That is, even if it be granted that self-consciousness together with the formative principles of knowledge come to exist at a particular stage in the development of individual experience, we cannot consider this fact as a ground for rejecting the findings of the self-conscious individual who necessarily interprets facts in accordance with the logical categories. The psychologist himself, for instance, is at the self-conscious level, and his description of "the successive stages in the advance from the one level of experience or knowledge to the other" must be in terms of the categories in the logical sense, and he will surely repudiate the suggestion that the description is purely anthropomorphic and, as such, may or may not correspond to real facts. If then it is admitted that the individual experiences which he describes are real facts in the world, and if it be further admitted that he cannot accept the Lockian opposition of what is real to what we "make for ourselves," then the logical categories must be in the individual experiences though the individual may not be fully conscious of them. Ward admits that the human standpoint is the highest and the nearest to us, but the question is not in fact one of temporal relation between one stage of development and another. The problem rather is whether any description can be made intelligible except in terms of the categories, and whether every description



should not assume the objective validity of the categories. Further, if we agree with Ward that the subject of experience, though last in the order of knowledge is yet first in the order of existence, should we not extend this insight to the case of the categories as well?

A psychology that denies these plain considerations must be inevitably landed in the inextricable difficulties of naturalism and agnosticism. The spectre of the Thing-in-itself being the inevitable consequence of the attempts to limit thought within a part of reality, it is bound to visit us as often as we raise a wall between thought and reality, irrespective of the point at which it is erected. We may either limit thought within the field of appearance, or within the four walls of trans-subjective experience, the logic of the situation remains the same. And while the logic remains unchallenged, it is immaterial whether we are engaged in tracing the evolution of mind from matter or that of thought from sense. If the absolute homogeneity of Herbert Spencer be, as Ward rightly remarks, equal to nothing, then his own proposal to begin with a mere sensori-motor continuum cannot meet with a better prospect. We need not here prejudge the issue that divides the temporalist from the eternalist, and consider how far the recognition of the failure of psychology to trace the genesis of the logical categories should commit

one to Green's theory of an Eternal Intelligence, and whether Green's is the only alternative to naturalism and agnosticism. But we believe he was essentially right in his incisive remarks on the pretensions of psychology to offer a satisfactory theory of knowledge.

The difficulties which we have so far tried to detect in Ward's psychological attitude to the problem of knowledge are crystallized in his theory of self. The subject-object relation which, according to him, characterizes experience at every stage gives birth necessarily to an agnostic doctrine of self, because he never gives up his initial assumption that experience is a relation between two determinate entities one of which is the subject. Such an assumption must spell disaster to every theory of self, and the puzzles and paradoxes which it involves are nowhere more explicitly brought out than in Ward's treatment of self-consciousness.

His solution of the problem of self-consciousness, to put it briefly, consists in pointing out that if we begin with self "represented by concentric objective zones, sensory, ideational, personal, spiritual" we at last end with a *focus imaginarius*, which, though "suggested by the structure of experience, is not only devoid of all 'content' in fact, but is necessarily so devoid from its very nature as a limiting concept—like its analogue the point, that which has position

but neither parts nor magnitude This concept of the Pure Ego, or I, in other words, is the limit to which the empirical Ego points ”<sup>38</sup>. What then, asks Ward, “can be the meaning of talking of a ‘pure subject’ to whom it is all presented?”

Ward himself admits that his own answer to this question, though psychologically simple, may fail far “of being speculatively adequate ” And it has been urged by Prof. G F Stout that “as an account of the development of the self and of self-consciousness, Ward’s work is here admirable and ought to be carefully studied by every psychologist But considered as an attempt to meet his own theoretical problem of how the pure ego, as such, can be known at all, it seems to me to be a brilliant failure ”<sup>39</sup> For, how can the pure ego “be known at all, seeing that in becoming known, it must become an object and so cease to be pure subject?” Even an indirect knowledge of the pure ego is impossible, because “the pure ego is supposed to be initially invisible,” and it follows logically that we can know, either directly or indirectly, “only its presentational doubles” which are not the pure ego but only “presentational wrappings which mask and disguise it ” “Into the empty form of consciousness,” says Ward, “our

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<sup>38</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p 377

<sup>39</sup> *The Monist*, Vol XXXVI, 1926, p 47

being fits."<sup>40</sup> But how can it be *known* to fit, if all that is known is the empty form, the positive content not being known but merely experienced "<sup>41</sup>

We need not examine the alternative method, suggested by Stout, of "giving up" the conception of the pure ego altogether, and substituting in its place the unity of a complex whole, partly because we have already sufficiently exposed the fallacy of confusing the subject with the mind, and we believe that nothing less than this confusion is involved in identifying the unity of the self, considered as the ultimate presupposition of experience, with "the unity of the total complex of its experiences "<sup>42</sup> But apart from the question of the tenability of his positive doctrine, his statement of the problem of self-consciousness, we think, is as clear as it can possibly be. And if our previous contentions be correct, then the pure ego, notwithstanding the difficulties which it leads to, is the inexpugnable postulate of all knowledge and experience

Despite the difficulties, however, Ward's account of the pure ego has a unique importance. Because, it seems that of all the contemporary thinkers who

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<sup>40</sup> *Principles of Psychology*, p. 381.

<sup>41</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>42</sup> Prof. Stout, *Some Fundamental Points in the Theory of Knowledge*, p. 6.

have approached the study of mind exclusively from the standpoint of psychology, he has the merit of keeping his eyes wide open to the perplexities which beset the psychological approach and of offering solutions in so far as such solutions are possible at all within the limitations of a special science. As a psychologist he has, for instance, to present a scientific account of the nature and growth of individual experience, and this commits him to treat the subject of experience as one object or thing among other things, much as a physicist or a biologist treats the materials of his investigation connecting them in multifarious directions in space and time. And as a biologist, in interpreting his data, has to take the help of a different order of categories from that which the physicist employs, owing to the special nature of his subject-matter, so Ward too, as a psychologist, has to bring into his service a number of notions peculiar to his subject-matter and expose the insufficiency of mere physical and chemical analogies in interpreting the growth of individual experience. Nevertheless, he is not blind to the difficulties of such a procedure which he seeks to surmount by forcing Kant to tell a psychological tale. Thus, while repudiating all attempts to bring the subject-object relation under any other subordinate relation, he continues to view it as analogous to the relation between an organism and its environment, and inter-

action is explicitly stated to be the most salient feature of the subject-object relation. We need not repeat here what has already been said in this respect. Ward, as we have contended, has failed to do justice to his speculative insight owing to a strong biological predilection. When, however, he comes to deal directly with the nature of the pure ego and the possibility of self-consciousness, he makes a desperate attempt to rise above his prepossessions. The subject, then, is no more described as a thing distinguished from other things by the capacity to feel, act and attend in relation to a sensori-motor continuum. On the contrary, it reduces itself to a limiting concept to which the empirical ego points, an empty form, a *focus imaginarius*.

Thus Ward's exposition of self-consciousness suffers from a vacillating attitude which seems to arise from his attempt to reconcile the best teachings of epistemology with the findings of psychology. But the epistemological and the psychological attitudes are as distant from each other as the north pole from the south pole, and the result is that his analysis has failed to satisfy the psychologist as much as the epistemologist. Bradley, for example, has made some very serious observations on Ward's position which go to the root of the matter. The puzzles of consciousness and self-consciousness, we are told, are due to "the internal difficulties of the relation and its

terms and then again in the fact of the relation itself."<sup>43</sup> The difficulties, according to Bradley, arise in the following way: "We have an object, a something given, and it is given to the subject. Is the subject given? No, for, if so, it would itself be an object. We seem, then, to have one term and a relation without a second term. But can there be a relation with one term? No, this appears to be self-contradictory, and, if we assert it, we must justify and defend our paradox. But, again, can a term be known only as a term of a relation or relations, while it is not, in any respect, known otherwise? No, once more, this is impossible, and in the end unmeaning. Terms are never constituted entirely by a relation or relations. But, once more, can we have a relation, one term of which is contained in the experienced and the other not? No, for a term, which is not in some sense experienced, seems nothing at all."<sup>44</sup>

It is probably under the force of these searching criticisms that Ward had to distinguish between experience and knowledge. The pure ego, he says, though first in the order of existence is, yet, last in the order of knowledge. But this knowledge is not, as he is careful to explain, knowledge in the sense in which

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<sup>43</sup> *Essays on Truth and Reality*, p. 195.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p. 192.

it implies an object. Experience is wider than knowledge in the strict sense, and the pure ego, though within experience, cannot be known as an object. But the difficulty, we believe, cannot be met in this way and Ward seems to win an easy victory over his critic, by pushing back the problem. For, the question remains how, if experience always involves a subject-object relation, it is possible to experience the subject without turning it into an object. There can be no experience without a subject—this is the corner-stone of Ward's analysis of experience, and it follows from this that the subject to be experienced must have another subject, and so on *ad infinitum*.

The fact is that these difficulties are insurmountable as long as the subject-object relation is regarded as a relation between two things, and Ward, in spite of his insistence on the unique nature of this ultimate relation, has the tendency, sometimes too clear to be ignored, to represent it as analogous to any other relation *within* knowledge. And so far as he does so, the remarks of such competent critics as Stout and Bradley will remain unchallengeable. On the other hand, when his attitude advances from the psychological to the epistemological plane—and this, be it remembered, he can only do by forgetting the results of his previous analysis—his position is unassailable. The pure subject, he then urges, is



not to be confused with the concentric objective zones, such as the sensory, the ideational, the personal or the spiritual ego. The latter, as Prof Stout aptly describes them, are but presentational wrappings which mask and disguise the pure ego. As every presentation implies a subject to which it is presented, all attempts to grasp the subject as a presentation will necessarily end in giving us, not the pure ego, but only its presentational misnomer, and it matters little in the long run whether the presentation be the so-called bodily self, the ideational self, or the spiritual self

## CHAPTER III

### THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL THEORY

The psychological theories of self which all agree in conceiving it to be one thing among other things and in refusing to distinguish between the subject of knowledge and what is generally called 'mind' were found, on examination, to have obscured the knowledge situation owing to their failure to recognise clearly and consistently that knowledge is the medium through which all that is real must reveal itself, and that knowledge, in the strict sense, implies interpretation according to certain ultimate principles which on that very account are principles of existence as well. The most fundamental of these principles, we have maintained, is a synthesising or interpreting subject which being the source of all the fundamental concepts imbedded in the objects of knowledge cannot itself be an object. The psychological theories, in ignoring this important truth, have been under the influence of a sort of error which may be called, after Kant, a transcendental illusion. This illusion we have seen to have its origin in the difficulty of overcoming our inveterate habit of conceiving the subject-object relation on the analogy of inter-objective relations, and thus forgetting that every relation between

one object and another must necessarily imply their relation to a subject, and hence the latter relation is not on the same footing as the former. Under the influence of this habit the subject has inevitably come to be conceived as a thing and knowledge as an attribute.

As we now pass on to the consideration of the epistemological theories, we may begin by concentrating on the fundamental agreement between their contentions and those which we have so far tried to justify. It is well known that the post-Kantian idealists, whatever be their differences from Kant in other respects, are at one with him in recognising the important distinction between the self as an ultimate unity presupposed in all knowledge and the self as one of the objects of knowledge. In other words, the psychological approach to the problem of self and other allied problems of knowledge have been always condemned as unsatisfactory by those who are generally known as the neo-Kantians or the neo-Hegelians owing to the varying degrees of similarity between their contentions and those of Kant and Hegel. The most significant of the contentions which bind them to Kant and Hegel, however, is, at least in so far as our present purpose is concerned, that the subject is not a substance and that knowledge is not a quality. And if our previous contentions be correct, then the epistemological theories represent so far a distinct

advance upon the psychological theories of self, and the theories of knowledge which have not lost sight of this basic truth must consequently be much more adequate than any theory which consciously or unconsciously identifies the subject with substance. If, however, this similarity is significant, equally significant is the disparity which exists between Kant and the post-Kantian idealists, and which has led to a partial modification of the Kantian account of self and to a more or less emphatic rejection of the puzzles of self-consciousness as formulated by Kant ✓

We have already ventured the suggestion that there is perhaps no *via media* between the theory of ego, as lying beyond relational experience and consequently defying all definite knowledge, and the theory which, either overtly or covertly, considers the ego on the analogy of a thing and thus commits the transcendental illusion. In other words, the recognition of a noumenal supra-relational ego is forced upon us in proportion to the success with which we are able to remove the transcendental illusion from our account of the knowledge situation, and hence there can be no third alternative theory in addition to that which accepts the noumenal ego and that which regards the ego in knowledge as a particular substance. It now remains to see how far the post-Kantian idealists have succeeded in steering clear of these alternatives, and, in fact, the epistemological theories

do claim to offer a third alternative. For, if they seek to avoid, on the one hand, the mistake of identifying the subject of knowledge with a particular mind or the empirical ego, they are equally anxious to repudiate the grounds which landed Kant in an inextricable quandary regarding the possibility of self-consciousness. It is true that a reality beyond the spatio-temporal world forms almost the bed-rock of the idealistic speculations after Kant and Hegel, and this reality is reached generally through an analysis of the function of the ego in knowledge. But, it is denied with more or less definiteness of emphasis that this ego is such as to preclude the possibility of definite knowledge. The ego, it is held, far from being unknowable, is the knowable *par excellence*, though it is not one object among others. This position, however, as we shall see presently, has been held by different thinkers with unequal emphasis on the two points both of which are equally important for its successful exposition. As a result, some have laid a greater stress on the difference between the ego and the world of things, and have proportionately sacrificed the force of the second point, namely, that the ego is knowable. Those, on the other hand, who have accentuated the knowability of the ego have come perilously near conceiving it on the analogy of things that are constituents of the world of knowledge. This uncomfortable tendency to invest one of the two vital

points with logical cogency by proportionately weakening the strength of the other is clearly noticeable in the development of post-Kantian idealism, and for a detailed justification of this contention we must now turn to two of the chief representatives of this valuable school of thought

The logical see-saw which has been described above as arising from the attempt to hold together the theory of a knowable ego with the distinction of the self as subject from the self as a substance may be traced back to Green with whom practically begins that masterly treatment of knowledge which has been the source of inspiration for a number of subsequent thinkers of the idealistic school. It will be needless to enter with any detail into his theory of knowledge to which we had had already a number of occasions to refer in confirmation of our own contentions. In insisting on the impossibility of subsuming the subject of knowledge under those formal conceptions of which it is the source, in repudiating the notion of knowledge as a quality of a particular substance, in showing the self-refutation of every attempt to represent knowledge in terms of something other than itself,—he has laid the foundation of an epistemological analysis which may truly be called the prolegomena to every system of sound metaphysics. It is, however, when he comes to deal specifically with the nature of the self or the principle of union that is

presupposed in all knowledge that his guidance becomes unsteady, though, even here, it does not altogether fail us

It has become a commonplace with Green's students that the knowledge as well as the existence of Nature, according to his analysis, presupposes a unity of consciousness which is the source of those conceptions through which the world of facts exists. This consciousness or principle of unity is the ultimate condition which explains the possibility of that mutual relations or determination without which knowledge of objects would be unrealised and unrealisable. For that very reason, however, the ultimate principle of unity cannot be one of the related facts. If it is agreed that knowledge "consists in the establishment of relations between data of sensibility," then, he tells us, it can be ascertained by reflective analysis that "the existence of a knowable nature implies that of a principle of union which is not itself part of the knowable nature, not one or any number of the relations which constitute it, an unconditioned, in relation to which alone the mutual conditioning of phenomena is possible, a consciousness of laws of nature, or rather a principle of consciousness which, in relation to sensibility, yields laws of nature, which is not itself subject to those laws of nature."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, it is urged in another

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<sup>1</sup> *Works, II*, p. 90

context that "the really prolific element" in Kant's theory of knowledge is the view of the noumenon "which he calls the ego, as the source of the categories" and which on that account cannot be brought under categories.<sup>2</sup> Locke's contradictions, Green points out elsewhere, are due to his "avowed enterprise of knowing that which renders knowledge possible as he might know any other object."<sup>3</sup> What Locke fails to see in this connection is that every "interrogator of the individual consciousness seeks to know that consciousness, and just for that reason must find in it at every stage those formal conceptions, such as substance and cause, without which there can be no object of knowledge at all. He cannot state anything that he knows save in terms which imply that substance and relation are in the things known. If nature is the object, he must find them in nature, if his own self-consciousness, he must find them in that consciousness."<sup>4</sup> Hence the principle of unity which is the source of the conceptions of substance and cause and which is implied in the interrogator's attempt to know "the individual consciousness" cannot be itself one of the conditioned things of the knowable nature

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, III, p 127

<sup>3</sup> *Works*, I, p 109

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p 27



Green's conclusions about this ultimate principle of unity are stated in a far clearer language in a well-known section of the *Prolegomena* "That there is such a consciousness," he tells us, "is implied in the existence of the world, but *what* it is we only know through its so far acting in us as to enable us, however partially and interruptedly, to have knowledge of a world or an intelligent experience"<sup>5</sup> Green is here evidently thinking of his Spiritual Principle, but as he holds with a number of eminent idealists that ours is "a limited mode" of "the world-consciousness," his remarks hold good equally of what is generally called the human consciousness in that aspect of it in which it is the principle of unity presupposed in all knowledge. As he himself points out, the self-distinguishing consciousness which is the condition of nature "is one which, on however limited a scale, we ourselves exercise in the acquisition of experience, and exercise only by means of such a consciousness"<sup>6</sup> This, according to Green, is all that we are entitled to say positively about that something which is the ultimate condition of nature "We are further entitled to say of it, negatively," he remarks significantly, "that the relations by which, through its action, phenomena are determined are not relations of

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<sup>5</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 58

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 59

it—not relations by which it is itself determined. They arise out of its presence to phenomena, or the presence of phenomena to it, but the very condition of their thus arising is that the unifying consciousness which constitutes them should not itself be one of the objects so related "

Such passages can be infinitely multiplied from Green's works to show that he was fully alive to the logical consequence of his analysis of knowledge. The subject-object relation, if properly grasped, must inevitably lead to the conception of a noumenal ego which itself is but a limiting concept without a positive content. This Ego, in the words of James Ward, is "the limit to which the empirical Ego points";<sup>7</sup> but in itself is a mere "*focus imaginarius*," that cannot be known in the same way as we know an object. Indeed, the possibility of knowing the Ego is precluded by Green's entire analysis of knowledge, and this has been repeatedly pointed out by his critics. The Ego, here, reduces itself to "the bare geometrical point," as Balfour puts it,<sup>8</sup> or "the ideal focus," as A. S. Pringle-Pattison aptly describes it.<sup>9</sup> The critics, however, have generally considered this to be the

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<sup>7</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 377

<sup>8</sup> *Mind*, Vol IX, p. 89.

<sup>9</sup> *The idea of God*, p. 199. Cf also *Hegelianism and Personality*, p. 28

weakest point in Green's position, and from this they have, rather hastily, inferred the fallacious character of "any argument from the conditions of knowledge to the theorem of an All-Thinker and of the universe as the system of his thought" "What difference does it make," asks A S Pringle-Pattison, "whether we regard nature as existing *per se*, or insist that all her processes are registered in a mind, if that mind is nothing but such a register or impartial reflection of the facts" <sup>10</sup> The answer, we believe, is not far to seek, provided we remember Green's premises A philosophical conclusion is different from a mere unmediated belief Beliefs may be generated in a number of ways, they may be, in the words of Francis Bacon, *idola tribus, fori, specus, theatri*, and so, as it has been more recently contended, "pure insight and logic, whatever they might do ideally, are not the only things that really do produce our creeds" <sup>11</sup> Yet, no belief which is not rationally justifiable is entitled to the name of a philosophical creed To ignore this distinction between an unmediated and a mediated belief is to fall into that suicidal scepticism which was first propounded by the great sophists and has been revived in our time by the pragmatists who would expect us to accept the pragmatic theory as providing

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid* , p 200

<sup>11</sup> W James, *The Will to Believe*, p, 11

the only *absolute* standard of truth. On the other hand, when the absurdity of the pragmatist theory of truth claiming an absolute validity is realised, it will be clear that a philosophical creed must ultimately produce its logical credentials

In fact, however, these contentions are not denied by A S Pringle-Pattison who agrees that the ultimate principles of knowledge, such as "the principle of intellectual coherence," "we must and do accept as absolute" for, it is "a necessity of reason involved in the possibility of knowing anything—involvement therefore in all practical living as well as in the immovable belief in law and order which inspires all scientific investigation"<sup>12</sup> But if so much is granted, then, we cannot condemn "the direct argument from the conditions of knowledge" as yielding only nugatory conclusions. For, the principle of intellectual coherence is as much the result of the "direct argument" as the ego which is the principle of unity presupposed in "the possibility of knowing anything." Now, whether this ego should be called an empty form or not depends upon the extent to which we have succeeded in avoiding the confusion of the principle of unity involved in all knowledge with one of the knowable objects, or, what is the same thing in a different language, the confusion of the subject-object relation

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<sup>12</sup> *Loc cit*, p. 239

with an inter-objective relation. We need not repeat the arguments which Green brings forward against such confusions. To those who are of his way of thinking, he says, "all knowing and all that is known, all intelligence and intelligible reality, indifferently consist in a relation between subject and object"<sup>13</sup> Hence, the subject cannot be known in the same way as the object, though it is the inexpugnable basis of all knowledge, and all intelligible reality. This, far from being a defect in his theory of knowledge, is, when properly understood, an indication of the thoroughness with which he pursued his analysis to its legitimate conclusion.

Though, however, we reach this agnostic conclusion about the nature of the ego under Green's guidance, yet, as we have remarked above, he does not always keep steadfastly to this result of his own arguments, and then, probably under the influence of the Hegelian atmosphere which came to establish itself at Oxford at that time, he did not hesitate to characterise what ought to be a mere empty form according to his own analysis as a spiritual self-conscious being of which all that is real is the activity or expression. "The subject in virtue of the act, the object in virtue of the manifestation, are alike and in strict correlativity so far determined." Now, such language

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<sup>13</sup> *Works*, I, p. 386

may be interpreted in two different senses, and the wrong sense has a better chance of acceptance because it is in accord with our habitual ways of thinking. It may mean, that is, that the subject is real in the same sense as any knowable object may ever be, and that it is known as such a reality. This, however, would be in direct contradiction to his repeated assertions that the subject cannot be known in the same way as the object, that it cannot be brought under the conceptions of cause, substance and other categories through which the objects exist, that all intelligible reality indifferently consists in a relation between subject and object. If we follow his arguments here, then, even the spiritual reality, in so far as it is an intelligible reality, must presuppose the subject-object relation, and so must fall on the side of the object. And the correlativity which is said to exist between the subject and the object must be also carefully distinguished from the correlativity that may exist between one object and another. Yet, Green's language has the tendency to suggest that the spiritual principle and its correlativity are not essentially different from the things and the relations which constitute the objective world. Thus, while insisting in different contexts that the ultimate principle of union is "an unconditioned," and, as such, different from "any number of the relations which constitute" the knowable nature, he urges at the same time that the cor-

relativity of subject and object is such that "every determination of the one implies a corresponding determination of the other" That is, while there are passages in which the ultimate principle is rightly taken to be unconditioned, and indeterminable, there are others where it is thought to be determinable and so far conditioned

The fact seems to be that this oscillation on the part of Green arose out of his attempt to give a positive content to what his own impartial analysis of knowledge tended to show to be a mere empty form "The principle of union" or "the principle of consciousness," the existence of which is discovered through "reflective analysis" has none of those determinations which make the objects knowable, and so to characterise that principle further as spiritual, or as being in necessary relation to the world of objects, is to state more than the reflective analysis warrants The law of contradiction, for instance, is ascertained through a reflective analysis of the actual process of thinking, and in so far as it is implied in every assertion it may rightly be called an eternal principle of thinking. But this does not help us to determine the nature of that which is the presupposition of the reflective analysis itself As Green has put it himself, the formal conceptions are found in every object of knowledge—"If nature is the object, he must find them in nature, if his own self-consciousness, he must find

them in that consciousness." And consequently, these formal conceptions through which nature as well as self-consciousness exists cannot be applied to the subject for which they exist as objects. Green's critics, therefore, we believe, are essentially right when they protest against the metaphysical transformation of Kant's transcendental ego into an Absolute Spirit. It was reserved for Kant's successors, W. James tells us, to convert Kant's notion of *Bewusstsein überhaupt*, or abstract consciousness, into one infinite concrete self-consciousness which is the soul of the world and in which our sundry personal self-consciousnesses have their being.<sup>14</sup> But, in the words of Prof. A. Seth, "it must be in the highest degree improper to convert consciousness in general without more ado into a universal consciousness. We can have absolutely no right to transform the logical identity of type into a numerical identity of existence."<sup>15</sup>

When, however, we follow the general trend of his thought without emphasising the conflicting modes in which it is expressed, Green appears, on the whole, to value the distinction between the self as a subject and the self as a substance together with its logical corollary that the self cannot

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<sup>14</sup> *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 449.

<sup>15</sup> *Hegelianism and Personality*, p. 32.



be known, more than the theory of a knowable Absolute or an Eternal Spiritual Principle, though he is generally known as one of the absolutists whose chief task is to expound and justify the reality of a Universal Consciousness. And it is true that the bulk of his philosophical discourses is occupied with the theory of an Eternal Spiritual Principle which is the basis of his ethical and political conclusions, yet, this Spiritual Principle, according to his own express view, is not knowable except in the negative sense that it is not one of the objects that constitute nature. That this negative aspect of the doctrine is more predominant in Green's philosophy than what he says positively is also apparent from the criticism which it has evoked even from E. Caird regarding whose relation to Green it has been remarked: "Seldom have there been in the history of philosophy two men who so entirely entered into each other's mind and so entirely understood each other."<sup>16</sup> We pass on, then, to the masterly analysis of self-consciousness by E. Caird who is by common consent looked upon as the most reliable exponent of English neo-Hegelianism.

E. Caird's views on self and self-consciousness have a unique importance for the obvious reason

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<sup>16</sup> Prof. Muirhead, *Life and Philosophy of Edward Caird*, p. 131.

that he is not only one of the most accredited exponents of post-Kantian idealism, and consequently of the epistemological theory of self, but his strenuous effort to present the Kantian philosophy in a systematic form brought him into a more intimate touch with the different aspects and tendencies of Kant's thought than could be expected of any critic who would concentrate more or less on a limited portion of the Critical Philosophy. Caird's views represent the logical see-saw from the other side. That is, while Green's analysis of knowledge brought into prominence the agnostic side of the epistemological theory of self by its frequent insistence on the difference between subject and mind, Caird is compelled by the logic of the situation to throw this distinction into the background on account of his strong repugnance to any philosophical tenet that smacks of agnosticism. He would fain accept the distinction between the self as a noumenal condition of experience and the self as an empirical ego existing and developing in time, provided, and so long as, the noumenal ego is not raised above all the conditions of knowledge and experience as we discover them by an actual analysis. Thus, when pious feeling exaggerates "the division between divine and human, and even fears to admit the possibility of the intelligence of man apprehending in any sense the nature of God," Caird would remind us that in that case "religion

would be an impossibility."<sup>17</sup> It is no wonder, therefore, that he will assume an uncompromisable attitude to a theory of self which tends to suggest the impossibility of knowing it from the human standpoint. Hence his sustained polemic against Kant's statement of the puzzles of self-consciousness. And as his own views can be best appreciated through his criticism of Kant, we should begin with what he says against the alternative theory rather than his own positive opinions.

Caird's criticism of Kant's idea of self-consciousness is succinctly stated in a well-known passage of his small book on Hegel. Admitting the essential correctness of Kant's contention that the unity of the ego is presupposed in all knowledge, he complains that Kant's account of it is curious, for, "when we look at the matter more closely, it would seem that Kant is here himself guilty of a curious paralogism, in attacking what is our very highest type of knowledge, and rejecting it because it does not conform to his own preconceived ideas."<sup>18</sup> Though Kant's own analysis proves that "every object of knowledge, as such, involves a relation to a subject, in other words, that it is *not* a simple identity, but involves difference, and unity in difference," yet, his

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<sup>17</sup> *Hegel*, p. 140

<sup>18</sup> *Hegel*, p. 147

"mind was secretly possessed with the preconception that the one thing *entirely* intelligible is a pure abstract identity which has no division or difference in it " But when we get rid of this preconception it would appear that self-consciousness is no simple unity or identity, "for if so, it must be purely an object or purely a subject, but really it is both in one, all other things are *for it*, but it is *for itself* " Regarded in this light self-consciousness is our highest type of knowledge, or knowable *par excellence*, "inasmuch as in it the object, which is distinguished from the subject, is, at the same time, most perfectly coalescent with it " That is, as knowledge is the relation of an object to a conscious subject, "it is the more complete, the more intimate the relation, and it becomes perfect when the duality becomes transparent, when subject and object are identified, and the duality is seen to be simply the necessary expression of the unity,—in short, when consciousness passes into self-consciousness " "Self-consciousness is the standing enigma for those who would separate identity and difference " <sup>19</sup> When, on the contrary, it is seen that "the self exists as one self only as it opposes itself as object, to itself as subject, and immediately denies and transcends that opposition,"

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p 149

when, that is, it is seen to be "a concrete unity, which has in itself a resolved contradiction," there will be no difficulty in understanding that "its own existence is implicitly the solution of all the division and conflict of things "

This, briefly stated, is Caird's theory of self-consciousness which he develops by a criticism of Kant from the standpoint of Hegel, and which, according to him, is the only theory that can successfully overcome the perplexities relating to the possibility of knowing the source of all knowledge. The self, according to this view, is described as a "dual unity," a "restored unity," an "organic unity," or again as a "pure transparent identity-in-difference." The truth that all these descriptions are meant to bring out is that self-consciousness is a mediated consciousness, it is a consciousness which presupposes the consciousness of the objects, and so cannot be realised except in relation to the latter. Hence, it is further urged, the development of the consciousness of objects and the development of self-consciousness proceed strictly *pari passu*, and every defect in our knowledge of the world corresponds to a consciousness of disunion in ourselves. It will be out of place to explain with any detail here the further considerations by which Caird is led from the organic nature of the development of self-consciousness to the idea of a "perfect intelligence" or a "spiritual principle" of which the

world is the self-manifestation;<sup>20</sup> or, as he puts it in another context, "time and space, the world of objects so related, cannot be adequately understood unless we regard it as essentially related to a conscious self, and as a necessary element in its self-consciousness or, in other words, unless we regard the world in space and time as essentially the manifestation of a spiritual principle,"<sup>21</sup> which, again, "shows its unity with itself just in the process of change"<sup>22</sup>

The question that is all-important for our present purpose is whether the explanation of what may be called mediated self-consciousness does really solve the puzzles of self-consciousness as formulated by those who have admitted them to be inseparable from our necessarily discursive knowledge. That is, granting that mediated self-consciousness is a restored unity, is a return of the self upon itself, do the conditions of this mediated self-consciousness remove the puzzles as they are seen by those who distinguish between this type of self-consciousness and that self which is the ultimate principle of all knowledge and experience. The answer will clearly depend upon the meaning of self. If the self can be shown to be real only in so far as it returns upon itself, then, of

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<sup>20</sup> *Critical Philosophy*, I, p. 425

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 654.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, II, p. 89

course, there is no room for any serious difficulty in accounting for self-consciousness. The self in this sense may well be called a dual unity, or a unity in duality, and it may perhaps also be said with some amount of truth that it is in the return of the self upon itself that "the ego, strictly speaking, comes into existence," and that "only that being is truly to be called an 'I' which calls *itself* so."<sup>23</sup> But can we identify this self with the ultimate unity presupposed in experience? As an account of the development of self-consciousness from the stage of an "undifferentiated unity" to that of a "dual unity" this idealistic theory may be true. But can it identify the developing self with the subject without committing itself to a view of the self which is pre-Kantian? Evidently, all talks of development and growth are intelligible only in respect of a thing which is in time, and is subject to the categories through which alone any object exists for us. And it follows from this that the self that develops from consciousness to self-consciousness must be under those very conditions of space, time and categories which are the conditions of objectivity. This self, therefore, cannot be the subject in the true sense of the term.

This distinction between the developing self and the subject is, in fact, accentuated by Caird in differ-

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<sup>23</sup> *Critical Philosophy*, I, p. 403

ent contexts Mind, he tells us, has a twofold aspect, because it is 'not merely an object in the known and knowable world, he is also a subject of knowledge, and it is only for such a subject that an object or a world of objects can exist. Hence we may speak of man's knowing himself in two ways of a knowledge of himself in which he is regarded simply as the self, the thinking subject which is implied in all objects of knowledge and of a knowledge of himself as a human being, distinguished from other human beings, from the animals and from nature in general, and standing in definite relations to each of them''<sup>24</sup> The defect of the "psychological theory of knowledge," it is further declared, consists in this that it "treats the faculty of knowledge merely as an attribute of certain things in the world, by which they are characterised and distinguished from other things, so that, *e.g.*, as weight is the attribute of a stone, thought is the attribute of man." Epistemology, on the contrary, looks upon mind as "presupposed in everything known or knowable, or, in other words, in so far as the principles which are involved in the relation of objects to a conscious self are the latent presuppositions of all knowledge, the principles through which everything else must be known, and by means of which, therefore, every other kind of

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11



knowledge must be tried ” Hence, it is further pointed out, that as “no object of knowledge is given apart from its relation to the subject,” we must avoid the “confusion of the distinction of the subject and the object of knowledge with the distinction of mind and matter as different objects of knowledge ”<sup>25</sup> Now, this line of thought, if properly developed to its consequences, leads necessarily, as we have frequently urged, to an agnostic theory of self, in so far as the self as subject has none of those conditions of objectivity by means of which all objects, including mind itself, can be known Caird, however, is anxious to save his theory from the agnostic tendency which was prominent in Green’s elaboration of the epistemological doctrine of the self And the result is that he ends by over-emphasising the other extreme of the logical see-saw That is, starting with the same premises as Green did, yet trying to evade the agnostic conclusion necessarily following from those premises, Caird comes unwittingly to view the subject of knowledge as an object, and so far fails to maintain the epistemological attitude with which he started

It will no doubt appear as extremely improbable that Caird who opened his famous exposition of the Kantian theory of knowledge with an emphatic rejection of the psychological theory should have come

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid* , p 20

to regard the subject as an object But, we believe, the greatest thinker cannot help falling into confusions when he attempts to know the ultimate principle of knowledge in the same way as he knows an object, or, what is the same thing from the other side, when he seeks to avoid the agnostic conclusion that follows from the epistemological distinction of subject from mind In illustration of the confusions into which such a thinker must fall in the long run, we have but to refer to a very significant passage in which Caird makes a desperate attempt to reconcile the epistemological distinction of the self as the ultimate presupposition of all knowledge from every known and knowable object, with his belief that the self is knowable *par excellence* When we apply the idea of development to a self-conscious being, we cannot, it is maintained, "suppose a difference, such as exists between things as in space and time, to exist in that for which alone time and space are Yet, on the other hand, in so far as we admit that such a consciousness is gradually developed, we are obliged to regard the subject of it as passing through states in time and standing in relation to objects which externally affect it Our first solution of the difficulty will naturally be to say that the developing being presupposes the externality which yet it negates, and that it presupposes the successive determination of the subject which yet is a conscious subject only as it

cancels succession in itself. But the difficulty returns that, in taking this view, we seem to be making the subject of the consciousness, for which time and space alone are, itself an object in time and space, while yet we regard the process of its existence as one in which both time and space are negated. To put it more directly, a developing consciousness is conceived as passing through a series of stages, yet just so far as its development is *for itself*,—and it cannot be *its* development, strictly speaking, till it is for itself,—it neutralises this change. How to get rid of this difficulty? Caird's answer is that "while space and time and all objects in them exist only for a self-conscious subject, and while, in so far as I am a conscious self, they exist for me, yet that I am a derived self-consciousness, and so far must be regarded as an object, and not as a subject, though it is only as a subject that I am in the proper sense an ego or self,—a being which can say "I" "<sup>26</sup>

Thus, in his attempt to steer clear of the two extreme positions,—namely (1) the self is one object among others, and (2) the self is not knowable,—Caird, in direct contradiction to his epistemological premises, comes to yield to that transcendental illusion which is inseparable from the psychological attitude, and which he has himself done so much to

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<sup>26</sup> *Critical Philosophy*, I, p. 648, also II, p. 399

explode. While rightly insisting that every known and knowable object presupposes a subject for which the object can exist, and which, therefore, cannot be identified with any object of knowledge except through a confusion, while emphasising the important distinction between the subject of knowledge and mind which is but one of the objects of knowledge standing in definite relations with other objects, while entering an emphatic protest against the widespread illusion to regard the subject as a thing and knowledge as a quality, Caird is compelled to countenance a theory which, when strictly interpreted, cannot be reconciled with his epistemological findings. The conceptions of "a derived self-consciousness" and of a subject which may be "regarded as an object" cannot be seriously justified without violence to the valuable truth that the subject-object relation is ultimate, and, as such, it is presupposed by every other relation. All distinctions are within knowledge, and so A and B as objects on which we can hold intelligible discourses must both fall within knowledge, irrespective of the nature of the relation obtaining between them. A, for instance, may be either the cause or the effect, the antecedent or the consequent, the end or means, the substance or attribute, in relation to B. But all these multifarious relations which are but the different ways of determining A and B must ultimately fall within the

subject-object relation, or, which is the same thing in another language, must fall within knowledge. A subject, therefore, that can be regarded as an object, or a self that is derived from something other than itself, is an entirely inconceivable and self-contradictory notion, whatever may be the ultra-logical grounds on which its claims to a respectful hearing be justified.

On a closer examination, however, it would appear that such inconceivable notions as a derived self-consciousness and an objectified subject are not so much dictated by logical exigencies as by what may be called the gnostic prejudices of Caird. If everything which is real must exist for a subject, it will necessarily fall on the objective side. How then to know the subject to be real? We must either say that the subject is only a *focus imaginarius* though it is at the same time the basis of all knowledge, it is the determining principle involved in all knowledge of objects and hence cannot be itself determined except by giving up the initial position that all objects exist for a subject. The other alternative, which Caird endeavours to defend, is to start with the assumption of the knowability of the subject and then, as nothing can be knowable except by presupposing a subject, to refer to another subject for which the former subject is an object. But, as Bradley has rightly urged, the old difficulty is not

solved by this appeal to the new subject; for, even here "the correlated terms are for a subject which itself is not given. The correlation falls in the experience of this new subject, which itself remains outside that object."<sup>27</sup> And, as a matter of fact, even Caird is sometimes forced by the logic of the situation to admit that "the correlativity of the object and subject is a correlativity for the subject,"<sup>28</sup> and, regarded in this sense, the self "overreaches the distinction between itself and its object."<sup>29</sup> But, then, the all-important question, to put it naively, is --which of the two subjects do you mean to refer to in this context? Does the world of objects stand as a correlative to the new subject for which the object as well as the old subject are mere objects? If not, then, are we to suppose that the correlativity of subject and object exists for the same subject which is one of the co-related terms? It is, we venture to submit, impossible to find an unambiguous reply to these questions from Caird's statements. The self, he will tell us, is a subject, a restored unity, an object, a derived self-consciousness, an infinite intelligence, an unconscious unity underlying the correlativity of subject and object, and what not. And it

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<sup>27</sup> *Truth and Reality*, p. 193

<sup>28</sup> *Critical Philosophy*, I, p. 425

<sup>29</sup> *Hegel*, p. 182

is this ambiguity which helps to conceal the defects of his attempts to reconcile the theory of a knowable ego with the epistemological interpretation of the subject-object relation

But while the ambiguity persists, it is useless to clear up the situation by means of metaphorical language. There is no doubt a ring of absurdity in the complaint that "it is impossible to see the sun because we cannot throw the rays of a candle upon it," and then point out that "as it is the light which reveals both itself and the darkness, so it is self-consciousness through which we know both itself and all other things."<sup>30</sup> The force of this remark depends upon the sense in which self-consciousness is used. If it simply means that every object presupposes a subject for which it exists, so that the unity of self which is the ultimate condition of all knowledge of objects cannot be denied, then, no doubt, the remark is not only true, but every attempt to assail it is bound to lead ultimately to self-refutation. Caird, however, does not seem to mean only this. The unity, he further tells us, is a unity in difference, or, more precisely, a pure transparent identity-in-difference. In this sense, it is the "ideal unity," or rather, the "last category" which contains and implies all the other categories. That is, self-consciousness, or rather,

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<sup>30</sup> *Hegel*, p. 147.

the self which is the ultimate presupposition of all knowledge of objects is no simple identity; "for if so it must be purely an object or purely a subject, but really it is both in one, all other things are *for* it, but it is *for itself* " If this be the meaning of the self, then, we maintain emphatically that the metaphor quoted above is not true. There is a whole world of difference between the position that the world exists for a self and that the self is neither a mere subject nor a mere object, but both in one.

We must, however, hasten to add that nothing which we have so far said implies a criticism of the category of unity-in-difference. On the contrary, we believe that it is a valuable correction of the logic of bare identity. A thing apart from its relations with other things is incomprehensible and unintelligible, and it is through the relations alone that the things get those mutual determinations which are indispensable for the existence of everything on which we can make intelligible assertions. But this does not show that the relating or determining principle for which the world of things exists, or in relation to which the world has a meaning is itself a unity-in-difference, or that it is itself determined by the world of objects. That would be to put the subject side by side with the object which is evidently tantamount to denying that there is a subject at all. And in fact Caird, as we have already remarked, in his anxiety



to avoid agnosticism has come perilously near conceiving the subject as an object, and has tried to save his own position from this apparent inconsistency by shifting the rôle of the subject from the finite to the infinite principle of union for which the finite principle is only an object. This, however, does not solve the real difficulty, it only pushes the real problem further back. Similarly, a number of other inconsistencies in Caird's views on self-consciousness arise from the same source, and these are made only less palpable by the ambiguous way in which the term subject is used. Thus, on the one hand, the process of reflection is said to discover "the categories and the forms of sense beneath ordinary experience, and the unity of the self beneath the categories and the forms of sense,"<sup>31</sup> on the other hand, the self is also said to be not so much beneath the categories as itself the highest category of knowledge, and in this sense it is supposed to be "the ultimate meaning or truth" of all other categories.<sup>32</sup> Now, if it is admitted that the self is the unity underlying the categories, then it clearly follows that it cannot be itself brought under them, and as nothing can be an object which is incomprehensible through the categories the self, in the

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<sup>31</sup> *Critical Philosophy*, II, p. 641

<sup>32</sup> *Hegel*, p. 183

absence of the conditions of objectivity, remains incomprehensible. If, on the other hand, the self be the highest category, then, clearly it is not the ultimate principle of knowledge, for a category is a mode of interpretation through which the world of objects exists, and, as such, it presupposes a principle beyond itself.

This brings us to another deep-lying inconsistency which runs through every attempt to evade the agnostic conclusion following from the epistemological attitude. The correlativity of subject and object has become almost a commonplace of philosophy since Kant undertook a transcendental deduction of the categories. But the value of this doctrine, like the value of every other such commonplace, depends upon a careful interpretation. As nothing can exist which is not realised or realisable within knowledge, and inasmuch as self is the ultimate principle involved in all knowledge, there is an important sense in which the self and the world are in perfect correlativity with each other. Every object in this sense presupposes a subject which is the common centre, as it were, of all the objective zones. When, however, it is added, from the other side, that there can be no subject apart from the object everything depends upon how this is understood. The very first point which has to be borne in mind in this connection, as we have suggested in relation to Green's position

that the correlativity of subject and object should not be conceived on the analogy of inter-objective correlativity. Two objects, such as father and son, husband and wife, are in correlativity with each other, so that there is a sense in which one cannot exist without its relation to the other. More precisely, as every object receives its determination from the relations in which it stands to other objects, it cannot exist in the absence of the latter. A thing, in other words, owes its being to the relations,—spatial, temporal, causal, etc.—in which it stands to other things, so that to take away all the relations from a thing is to reduce it to a pure nothing. On the other hand, our knowledge of the things grow more and more in definiteness according as it is brought into relation with an ever wider circle of things. Following this line of thought, we can easily see that for a perfect intelligence the world will present itself as a systematic whole in which all things are organically related with one another, so that any two things in that whole are in perfect correlativity with each other. But it is equally important to remember here that this inter-objective correlativity or relation is not analogous to the relation in which the correlative things stand to the subject which is their common presupposition, and in this sense the subject-object relation is the ultimate relation within which all the inter-objective relations must necessarily fall. All

intelligible reality, as Green has put it, must indifferently consist in a relation between subject and object

What, then, do we mean when in the light of this unique relation we interpret the view that the subject cannot exist apart from the object? In other words, is it possible to distinguish the subject-object relation from all inter-objective relations, and yet hold that the subject cannot exist except as organically related to the object? If it is admitted that the subject is the ultimate presupposition of every object of knowledge, can we reverse the proposition and maintain that the object is a presupposition of the subject? Our answer is that as the subject is not a thing which must be necessarily a determinate something, as it is only the limiting concept to which all objects point, but not a positive concept such as is implied in the notions of an ultra-phenomenal *object* or a noumenal *thing*, the questions formulated here, when taken strictly and seriously, are inadmissible. A noumenon, when it is something more than a limiting concept, has to be grasped only in contrast with the phenomenon, and, as such, it becomes an object of a different order. But however different may be the order to which a particular object may belong, as an object of thought it must submit to the conditions of objectivity and cannot be taken to be identical with the subject for which alone all objects and all distinctions among

objects exist. So when it is said that the subject is beyond the phenomenal world, the truth of the remark is entirely missed if we continue to regard the noumenal subject as a positive something. And from this it follows that no intelligible meaning can be ascribed to such assertions as that the subject cannot exist apart from the object, or that the object is a presupposition of the subject. For such observations have a meaning only on the assumption that the subject is a determinate something though it may belong to a different order from that under which the things other than the subject fall. But, in that case, as Kant has made it clear once for all, "the logical exposition of thought in general is mistaken for a metaphysical determination of the object." And in so far as the post-Kantian idealists have attempted a metaphysical determination of the subject the value of A. Seth's criticism cannot be overestimated. Kant's argument, he remarks, "is overlaid in parts by extraneous considerations, and infected by Kant's relativistic prejudices but in pointing out the merely logical character of the self reached by the analysis of knowledge, he is not only guided by a sounder instinct, but shows also a keener insight than his speculative followers." Then with reference to the passage quoted above it is observed. "The words are spoken of the metaphysical psychologists, but it would be impossible to characterise more aptly the fallacy which

underlies the neo-Kantian deification of the abstract unity of thought ''<sup>33</sup>

We are not concerned here with A. Seth's positive views, but the important observations he has made on the Kantian theory of ego, and on the neo-Kantian departure from the spirit of the critical philosophy are, we believe, based on a deep insight into the Kantian analysis of knowledge. The transcendental ego of Kant, he urges, cannot be identified with the spiritual principle of the post-Kantian idealists, and, in fact, "unless we have other data, and approach the question along a different road, we are still far from anything like spirituality or freedom in the ordinary sense of these words ''<sup>34</sup> "In this respect," it is further remarked, "Kant saw his way more clearly than many of those who make bold to teach him consistency. Kant himself, it is almost superfluous to point out, would have never acquiesced in the deductions which his neo-Kantian followers have drawn from his premises '' These deductions, in the opinion of A. Seth, are due to the mistake of transforming a logical subject into a metaphysical existence. The mistake perhaps may be more aptly described, as he himself suggests, as the transformation of the transcendental subject which logical exposition yields

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<sup>33</sup> *Hegelianism and Personality*, p. 38

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 29.

into a Universal Spiritual Consciousness by interpreting the subject as an object. The transcendental subject, when strictly taken, is a principle of unity, or a unifying principle, and, as such, no more than a *focus imaginarius* or a limiting concept, whereas the spiritual principle is something very definite, it is a unity-in-difference, or rather a unity which manifests itself in the differences, and is the source of our moral and religious aspirations. Thus the limiting concept of a noumenal subject is metaphysically determined as a definite object of thought. This object may not be in space and time, and perhaps it may also be said with some truth that it is not subject to the ordinary categories of causality and substance, yet it is at the same time characterised as spiritual and noumenal in a *positive* sense. But if it be granted that every object must exist for a subject with which the former cannot be identified, then, the noumenal object must equally be distinguished from the subject for which it exists. If, on the contrary, this particular object of thought be identified with the subject, there is absolutely no reason why any other object, such as matter and mind, electricity and magnetism, should fall on the objective side only.

The fact is, as Green has urged, in the passage already quoted, that the subject-object relation is the "generic element" in our description of the knowable universe, and so the thinking 'ego' is the source of the

conceptions in virtue of its presence to objects, "but under which for that very reason it cannot itself be known." And as that to which no conceptions are applicable cannot be an object of thought, the thinking ego eludes the grasp of our discursive knowledge. Yet, it is the basis of all knowledge and knowable universe, and of all distinctions within the knowable universe, be they the distinction of matter and mind, or spirit and matter, or phenomenon and noumenon. It may now be easy to see the real meaning of the correlativity of subject and object. The only sense in which this widely accepted doctrine is true is that every knowable thing presupposes a knower, or, more precisely, a unifying principle. But the presupposed principle is not a thing, nor an object of thought, for to make the subject an object of thought would require, as it is commonly said, another subject. Hence, all further talks of the subject, such as it is conditioned by the object, or it is determined by its relation to the object, or it expresses itself in the world of objects—are unmeaning and unintelligible, as they are inconsistent with the recognition of the ultimate character of the subject-object relation.

It is perhaps necessary to add here that the spiritual principle which Caird in agreement with the absolutists in general has inferred from the correlativity of the subject-object would never have been actually inferred if he had more carefully distinguish-



ed this correlativity from what we have called the inter-objective correlativity. But not having always clearly distinguished between these two types of relativity, and having taken the principle of identity-in-difference as the highest principle of thought, he steps beyond the subject-object relation to a "higher unity," or an "unconscious unity" which is supposed to lie "beneath the conscious duality of self and not-self," or "beyond the opposition of the subjective unity of thought and the objective unity of knowledge." That, here, Caird, contrary to his own teachings, has been led to confuse the subject-object relation with an inter-objective relation, and has unconsciously substituted a thing or object for subject, may be easily seen from his explanation of the idea of spirit. "Thought," it is said, "is always distinction, determination, the marking off of one thing from another," but though in his sense it is true that "a thing which has nothing to distinguish it is unthinkable, but equally unthinkable is a thing which is so separated from all other things as to have no community with them"<sup>35</sup> "If, therefore, we say that everything—every intelligible object of thought as such—must be differentiated from all others, yet we must equally say that no object of thought can be absolutely differentiated, in other words, differen-

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<sup>35</sup> *Hegel*, p. 135

tiated so as to exclude any identity or unity which transcends the difference." In this sense, "there is a unity which lies beneath all opposition" It is clear from such expressions that Caird is here thinking of things as intelligible objects of thought And consequently the relations and the distinctions he is talking of in this context are inter-objective relations But the difficulty is that he does not restrict these observations to the objects only, and goes on to remark that "neither things nor thoughts can be treated as simply self-identical—as independent or atomic existences, which are related only to themselves They are essentially parts of a whole, or stages in a process, and as such they carry us beyond themselves, the moment we clearly understand them" <sup>36</sup>

Now, when we speak of thoughts and things as parts of a whole, these parts, as well as the whole must be, according to his own showing, "at least intelligible, since they exist for our intelligence" And it follows from this that the *intelligence* for which the thoughts and the things exist cannot be identified with the *thoughts* which are grasped in distinction from the things. Nor can the whole of which thoughts and things are parts be identified with that intelligence for which it exists as an intelligible

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p. 137.

entity Caird, however, to the great bewilderment of his readers, speaks of the principle of unity-in-difference indifferently in respect of the subject-object relation as well as inter-objective relations. Not only this, but he actually characterises the spiritual unity as one in which "the idea of antagonism is overcome, contradiction reconciled,"<sup>37</sup> and it is further said to be a unity "which can be realised only through such a conflict." But, then, the question must press itself is not this spiritual unity itself "at least intelligible," and, as such, existing only "for our intelligence"? To answer the question in the affirmative is to admit that it is an object, and must presuppose, like every other intelligible reality, the subject. A negative answer, on the other hand, would lead ultimately to agnosticism which Caird rejects from the beginning.

All these difficulties, we submit, are due to the attempt to apply to the subject the principles which underlie our knowledge of the world of objects. Substance, causality, reciprocity quite as much as unity and difference, are categories to which the objects of thought must conform, but, for that very reason, the subject cannot itself be known under them. Caird admits this, but partially. "It was Kant's merit," he says, "that his criticism rested

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p 36.

from the first upon the principle, that it is impossible to apply to the subject the categories by which objects are determined as such, and in the second edition of the *Critique*, he made steps toward a view of inner experience, as not merely the consciousness of the self as an object among other objects, but as an outer experience freed from its abstraction, *i.e.*, regarded as the experience of a self ''<sup>38</sup> Having admitted this, however, Caird does not draw the conclusion which we have suggested, namely, that no category should be applied to the subject. The chief defect of psychology, according to him, is to regard man in whom nature comes to itself, or comes to self-consciousness as a phenomenon connected with other phenomena according to the category of causality and reciprocity. But "it is impossible, in truth, to take a conscious self as one of the objects of experience, objects which are conceived as externally determining and determined by each other, without leaving out all its distinctive characters as a conscious being. Even an animal cannot be fully or adequately determined from such a point of view, much less an intelligence. We need higher categories to do justice to life and mind, and if experience means the determination of objects by the principle of external necessity, we cannot have experience of such objects ''<sup>39</sup> Thus, according

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<sup>38</sup> *Critical Philosophy*, II, p. 100

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

to Caird, it is impossible to apply to the subject, not any category, but only the categories of external necessity, here we need higher categories. But does this conclusion really follow from Caird's premises? Without challenging the Hegelian gradation of categories, one can perhaps still maintain that the subject for which all objects exist and have their meaning is as little to be identified with life and mind as with matter and energy. Mind may require higher categories for its adequate determination, but the mind which is thus determined, as Caird himself has urged in another context, is not the subject. And a category, howsoever high may be its place in relation to other categories, is only a mode of determining an object of thought, and as such inapplicable to the subject for which all intelligible reality exists. And, in fact, when it is unreservedly admitted that Kant was right in recognising that "the relation of objects to the self cannot be brought under the same categories as those which determine the relation of objects to each other *for* the self,"<sup>40</sup> it is difficult to see how the case becomes different if, in place of matter and energy, the objects are life and mind.

The fact seems to be that Caird does not invariably and consistently stick to the truth that the subject-object relation is ultimate, though the whole

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, I, p. 603.

burden of his own analysis of knowledge rests upon its recognition. All that is thinkable or knowable, he rightly insists, presupposes the thinking ego. So the world of intelligible reality must presuppose the ego for which it exists, or, in other words, the world is an existence-for-self. But if this be recognised, then the self for which the world has a meaning cannot itself be regarded as forming an element within the world. Yet, the transition from one position to the other is made frequently, as if both the positions were identically the same. Indeed, this transition is almost characteristic of Caird as well as of those who are of his way of thinking. But on closer examination, it may be seen that from the doctrine that every object must exist for a subject it does not follow that the subject itself must be an object, or, what is the same thing in different words, from the truth that the world of objects has no meaning apart from its relation to the subject, it does not follow that the subject must somewhere be in the world. This would be to make the presupposition of the world itself a part of the world. And the position remains essentially unaltered, if we were to substitute for the world in space and time the term universe which includes a number of other worlds than the spatio-temporal world. Because, in that case, even the universe must be supposed to exist for the self, on pain of being

reduced to nothing. The self as the subject, as Caird himself tells us, is "presupposed in everything known and knowable," and in so far as the universe is at least knowable, the subject is the presupposition of the universe. However "anomalous" be the position of the subject in such a theory, it is the legitimate conclusion of an unbiassed logical procedure.

It is, however, interesting to note that Caird himself appears sometimes to come very near the position we are trying to maintain. Thus, for instance, in expounding Green's theory, he tells us approvingly that "if we cannot regard natures as complete in itself apart from a principle of intelligence substantially identical with that which we know in ourselves, then we may fairly argue that man, in so far as such a principle of intelligence manifests itself in him, is not to be reduced to a merely natural existence, a mere part of the natural system. If he were merely a part of it, he could not know it. Or, at least, if we do regard him as a part of nature, we must be using the word 'nature' to express the whole system of related phenomena, *including* the spiritual principle which it implies. And then we must find some other word to express the system of relations *exclusive* of that principle."<sup>41</sup> The legitimate conclusion from such lines of thought is that man, in so far as he

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<sup>41</sup> *Mind*, Vol. VIII, 1883, p. 547.

knows the universe, cannot be a part of the universe, or, conversely, if he were a part of the universe, he could not know the universe. But the universe *ex hypothesi* includes everything that can be thought of as existing or as real, hence the principle which the universe implies is not to be brought under the categories which are after all the modes of thought through which the universe exists. Caird, however, seeks to avoid this legitimate conclusion, as we have frequently noted, on account of his gnostic prejudices, or aversion to agnosticism. And the result is that though he emphasises that "we must be careful to observe that a being in whom the spiritual principle, which is the principle of unity in the world, manifests itself, must not be brought under categories," yet, he hastens to qualify his remark by an unwarrantable restriction to the categories of substance and cause only. This restriction, we have contended, is inconsistent with his own premises, and we need not repeat our contentions. But we can now see the reasons why Caird sounded a note of protest when Green, with an unprejudiced openness of mind, came to countenance a type of modified agnosticism in so far as the ultimate principle of knowledge was concerned. Green, it is complained by Caird, "while, like Kant, he bids us reason backwards from our intellectual and moral experience to that spiritual



nature in which lies the possibility at once of knowledge and of moral action, is also like Kant in refusing to say much of that spiritual nature in itself " Green, it is admitted, was right in holding that "the source of the categories cannot be brought under the categories," and this he has shown "with great force of argument " But the difficulty is that "he is unwilling to go much further—either in the direction of speculation about the nature of the self-conscious principle to which he has referred all things, or in positively working out any view of nature and human history as the manifestation of spirit "42

But, as we have tried to show above, it is not possible to go further than Green has really gone, except on other than logical lines, and in this regard Kant's attitude, we venture to suggest, was more logical than that of his illustrious exponent And Green's insight here is distinctly deeper than that of Caird If the subject-object relation is admitted to be unique, then, it is certainly more proper to insist, with Green, that the unifying consciousness "should not itself be one of the objects so related," or that the subject is a principle of union which is not "one or any number of the relations" that constitute nature, rather than hold, with Caird, that the self is "a circle of relations in itself,"43 and, then

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid* , p, 560

<sup>43</sup> *Hegel*, p 149

finding it "absurd to say that the synthesis by which it becomes conscious of itself as an object, at the same time hides it from itself" <sup>44</sup>

The difficulties of the psychological as well as the epistemological accounts of self-consciousness which have engaged us so far point to the crying need for a satisfactory theory of self. The puzzles, it may have appeared clear from the foregoing considerations, are ultimately traceable to the ambiguous use of terms 'consciousness' and 'knowledge'. Self-consciousness, self-knowledge, self-feeling, are some of the terms that hide a lot of sins and have spelt disaster to philosophical discussions on the problem of self. The prospects of a satisfactory solution of this supreme problem are, therefore, likely to be brighter if we start with the notion of consciousness rather than that of self. The doctrine which denies the very reality and existence of consciousness being the necessary result of a particular approach to the problem of self, it will be useful to begin with a short examination of this ultra-sceptical attitude of contemporary thought.

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<sup>44</sup> *Critical Philosophy*, I, p. 411

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RELATIONAL THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The development of philosophical thought is, not in a small measure, due to the rise of the sceptical spirit which paves the way to sound speculations by exposing the self-contradictory basis of dogmatism. Scepticism, therefore, is invariably a sign of the maturity and vitality of reason. There is, however, an unhealthy type of scepticism which, far from providing a stepping-stone to further progress and maturer growth, has always acted as a clog in the way of rational speculations, it doubts everything without looking at its own foundations, it carries on its destructive campaign against every established belief and institution without stopping to examine the ground upon which it itself stands. Any one who surveys reflectively the main currents of contemporary thought would have no difficulty in detecting that the majority of the currents have an unmistakable tendency towards a position that can hardly be distinguished from this unhealthy scepticism. The result is that a lot of mist has gathered around some of the most fundamental principles of thought and existence. The object of the following lines is to

attempt a partial dissipation of the mist with the aid of an Indian analysis of one of these basic principles, namely, the principle of consciousness

In a well-known passage of his *Commentary on the Prāśnopanīṣad*, Śaṅkara attempts a classification of the principal theories of consciousness each of which had its enthusiastic exponents in the history of Indian speculation. The advaita theory of consciousness is here distinguished from as many as four other theories which are carefully scrutinized and ultimately rejected as based upon an imperfect analysis of experience. These rival theories are defined as follows:—(1) that which looks upon consciousness as something that is very moment born and destroyed, (2) the theory which denies the very reality of consciousness, (3) that which regards consciousness to be an evanescent property of a permanent self, and (4) the theory according to which consciousness is the quality of matter.<sup>1</sup> It is easy to see that almost every theory of consciousness that is still in the forefront of philosophical discussion today can be classified under one or the other of the different heads mentioned here. And an examination of some of the outstanding theories of contemporary philosophy in the light of the advaita analysis may, therefore, be of fascinating interest for the modern thinkers.

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<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on the Prāśnopanīṣad*, VI, 2.

The polemical mood in which Śaṅkara expounds the advaita theory of consciousness frequently obscures the important hints he gives of a constructive theory, and it will, therefore, be useful to start with an initial statement of the main features of his position. The most important and far-reaching of his contentions is to be found in what may be called the foundational character of knowledge or consciousness. It ought to be accepted as a universal rule, he insists, that there can be no object of knowledge without knowledge <sup>2</sup>. None can prove something that is not known, and the attempt to prove it would be as absurd as to maintain that there is no eye though the form is apprehended <sup>3</sup>. The objects may change their essence, but consciousness cannot be said to change inasmuch as it witnesses all objects irrespective of the place where they may happen to be; the fact-of-being-known is thus implied by all objects without exception <sup>4</sup>. Even when something is supposed to be non-existent, this very non-existence cannot be proved in the absence of knowledge <sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> *Na hi jñāne asati jñeyam nāma bhavati kasyacit*

<sup>3</sup> *Kincit na jñāyate iti anupapannam; rūpam ca drśyate na ca asti cakṣuriti yathā.*

<sup>4</sup> *Svarūpavyabhicāresu padārthesu caitanyasyāvyabhicārāt yathā yathā yo yah padārtho vijñāyate tathā tathā jñāyamānatrāḍeva tasya tasya caitanyasyāvyabhicāritvam vas utatv m bhavati.*

<sup>5</sup> *Abhāvasyāpi jñeyatvāt jñānābhāve tadānupapattih.*

The second feature of the advaita analysis of consciousness lies in its insistence that consciousness is always distinct from the object of consciousness. The things, therefore, should on no account be identified with the consciousness which makes them its objects. From this follow two corollaries, namely, that consciousness cannot be its own object and that every object of consciousness is unconscious or material.

Out of these four cardinal points of the advaita theory of consciousness, the first would easily put a modern student in mind of the central contention of an influential school of thought which is generally known as the idealistic school. Since Kant's analysis of knowledge it has been a recognised tenet of the idealistic theory of knowledge that consciousness is the *prius* of reality, inasmuch as all things must be "determined in relation to the conscious self, as the one condition which we can lay down for them *a priori*."<sup>6</sup> In fact, the development of post-Kantian idealism bears eloquent testimony to the vitality of the advaita position, and the former may in this respect be regarded as an elaborate exposition and ramification of the latter.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> E. Caird, *The Critical Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 353.

<sup>7</sup> Compare, for instance, Green's remark that "all knowing and all that is known, all intelligence and intelligible reality, indifferently consists in a relation between subject and

Consciousness, when regarded in this light, is the ultimate principle of revelation for which alone the world of objects has a meaning, it is not a relation between two elements, on the contrary, it is the light which manifests all objects and all relations between the objects. It is "the centre of the whole world comprising the objects, the senses and the mind, and it has neither inside nor outside, it is altogether a mass of knowledge."<sup>8</sup>

This is generally known as the centre theory of self, conscious self, according to it, occupies the central place of the universe, inasmuch as all objects owe their meaning and significance to the relations in which they stand to the 'self' that essentially is consciousness. It is from this standpoint that the self is also described as the *Sākṣī* which witnesses all objects and all changes in the objects, it is *sarva-partyayadarśī* and *citśaktisvarūpamātra*.<sup>9</sup> The entire world is revealed only through the light of the self, "just as the light of the sun is the condition of the manifestation of all form and colour"<sup>10</sup> This is

object," and, consequently, the generic element in our definition of the knowable universe is "that it is such a relation" — *Works* I, 386. See also Lord Haldane, *The Reign of Relativity*, p. 150.

<sup>8</sup> *S. B. I. 4. 19.* Compare Lord Haldane's explanation of the sense in which the essence of the panorama of life centres in me as given in the *Reign of Relativity*, p. 169.

<sup>9</sup> *Commentary on the Kenopaniṣad*, 12

<sup>10</sup> *S. B. I. 3. 22.*

excellently expressed by Sureśvara when he remarks that the self and the not-self are established in the world through perception and other means of knowledge, but the not-self is in every case established only on the presupposition of the existence of the self<sup>11</sup> For a surprisingly similar language one may turn to Prof. B. Varisco's observations that objective existence "is *my* cognition, cognition of an experience belonging to myself, and obtained by an activity of my own, it would not exist, if I did not exist"<sup>12</sup> Hence all objects are said by Sureśvara to be *ātma-pūrvaka*. To put it in the language of modern idealism, existence-for-self is the highest category to which must conform all objects. Matter, mind, electron, proton, etc., have any meaning for us only in so far as they stand in relation to the conscious self whose reality, therefore, has to be presupposed by every intelligible entity. In this sense, consciousness is the prior principle or the foundational fact which cannot be reduced to something other than itself except through a confusion of thought.

A word of explanation may be useful at this place in regard to the precise meaning in which consciousness is said to be the *prius* of reality. This doctrine is often interpreted on the idealistic line and

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<sup>11</sup> *Nāṣkarmyasiddhi*, IV, 3

<sup>12</sup> *Know Thyself*, p. 2.



supposed to deny the independent existence of the material world apart from consciousness. This, however, would be to raise a highly controversial and difficult problem, and if the priority of consciousness could not be established till the age-long controversy on the relation between the external world and the knowing mind had been settled once for all in favour of idealism, the advaita theory of consciousness would naturally stand on a shaky foundation. It is, therefore, important to dissociate the assertion of the priority of consciousness from the idealistic contention, and realise clearly that the doctrine of the priority of consciousness is equally compatible with the realistic belief in an independent world. Even if it be granted that knowledge does not create but only reveals a pre-existent reality, yet it would remain unchallengeable that the external reality could not be revealed to us apart from consciousness which is the principle of revelation. We may thus be in a position to appreciate Green's well-known remarks that even if it could be admitted that matter and motion had an existence in themselves, it would still not be by such matter and motion, but by the matter and motion which is known that the function of the soul can be explained by the materialists.<sup>13</sup> The epis-

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<sup>13</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 13. Prof. R. B. Perry does not appear to us to have done full justice to the doctrine of the priority of consciousness when he associates it with idealism.

temological priority of the conscious self is thus reconcilable with realism as well as with idealism <sup>14</sup>

The force and vitality of the advaita position will be better appreciated through a consideration of the anti-advaita theories which, as noted above, are classified by Śaṅkara under four heads. The most audacious and apparently paradoxical of all these theories is that of the nihilists who reduce consciousness itself to pure nothing. Not content with the mentalism taught by the Buddhists of the Yogācāra school which reduced everything to momentary flashes of consciousness, the Mādhyamikās seek to cut the ground from under the feet of consciousness itself. This is evidently a very bold and dare-devil position which would easily outbraid a number of modern theories that deny the reality of consciousness. When W. James challenges the existence of consciousness and proves it to be nothing more than a loose name for the relations existing between certain events and

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in his admirable book, *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 105.—To limit things to what can be experienced may be groundless and misleading (*Ibid*, p. 316), the things may not require any home, yet the independent reality, call it a thing or a neutral entity, could not be revealed to us and so could not be used in explanation of anything if it had not been *known* at all.

<sup>14</sup> For a further exposition of the meaning of independence, I must refer the readers to my *Self, Thought and Reality*, pp. 115-120.

the life of the organism,<sup>15</sup> he had at least to seek the support of the neutral events for destroying the wide-spread prejudice for consciousness. Consciousness, for him, is a particular relation into which the neutral events enter which, therefore, must be acknowledged to be real entities. The Mādhyamikās, on the other hand, go about their iconoclastic business all single-handed and unaided and will not rest till all philosophical superstitions are finally eradicated including the Vijñānavādi's superstition in favour of consciousness<sup>16</sup>

Śāṅkara's attitude towards the theory of pure

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<sup>15</sup> *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Method*, I, 1904, since incorporated in *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p 17.

<sup>16</sup> This distinction between the position of the subjective idealist and that of the nihilist is beautifully brought out in the *Sarva-Siddhānta-Saṅgraha*, IV, 6, a work attributed to Śāṅkara. The only philosopher whose nihilistic perfection approaches the radical scepticism of the Indian Buddhists is H. Bradley who has so far been rightly characterised as "a genuine Mādhyamika" by Dr Th Stcherbatsky in his *Nirvāṇa*, p 52. But the difference between these positions is at least as great as their similarity. Bradley, in spite of his condemnation of the self and self-consciousness as mere appearances, is anxious to find a home for them in the life of the Absolute, though they have to undergo transformation and transmutation before they can enter it. Moreover, the self, for him, though not a true form of experience, is the highest form of experience which we have (*Appearance and Reality*, p 103). For Nāgārjuna, on the other hand, the self is as unreal as the son of a barren woman, and, consequently, has no place in Reality.

nothing or *Sūnyavāda* is generally one of sheer contempt.<sup>17</sup> Yet, however, he has indirectly subjected it to a scathing criticism which, though directed against some of the assumptions of Indian nihilism, may very well be utilized in assessing the merit of the modern theories. One of his contentions against the position of universal nihilism is that a significant denial has invariably a reference to something real as its logical basis, *e g*, when the illusory snake is negated as unreal this is made possible only on the basis of the perceived rope which is real.<sup>18</sup> Denial is significant only when something is left, if, on the other hand, "everything is denied, and no real entity is left, the negation becomes impossible and, consequently, that entity which we started to deny becomes real." Turning to the nihilist's denial of consciousness, it is remarked in another context that even if the position of the subjective idealist be left in the region of controversy and it is left undecided whether the object of knowledge is real or unreal, yet the reality of consciousness or knowledge has to be presupposed in either case.<sup>19</sup> Even the nihilists, it is observ-

<sup>17</sup> Compare, for instance, his indignant remark that nihilism does not merit refutation as it is opposed to all types of proof—*S B*, II. 2, 31.

<sup>18</sup> *Kinchidhi paramārtham ālambya aparamārthah pratīśidhyate*—*S B*, III, 2, 22.

<sup>19</sup> *Ubhayathāpi ghatādivyākāśasya bhāvabhūtatvam abhyupagatameva*—*Commentary on the Brh Up*, IV. 3. 7.

ed elsewhere, have to concede that non-existence or *abhāva* is knowable as well as permanent <sup>20</sup> And it would be absurd, therefore, to assert the knowability of negation while denying the reality of knowledge <sup>21</sup>

The modern theories of consciousness, as we have observed above, are less audacious and much less radical than the doctrine of the Indian nihilists. Even W. James who doubted the reality of consciousness did not doubt the reality of the neutral events which, according to him, were the ultimate stuff of the real world. Similarly, the behaviouristic and neo-realistic doctrines of consciousness, far from committing themselves to the position of universal negation, undertake to reduce consciousness to a particular type of relation between the external stimulus and the organism. That is, instead of reducing consciousness to pure nothing, these modern theories reduce it to something other than consciousness, and so far they escape partly the edge of Śaṅkara's criticism. But this partial escape brings out all the more prominently their weakness when judged in the light of the other part of the criticism. The most fundamental point in

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<sup>20</sup> *Commentary on the Prāśnopanīśad*, VI, 2

<sup>21</sup> This argument has found in Prof. Gentile one of its distinguished modern supporters. "It is clear that our very ignorance is not a fact unless at the same time it is a cognition so that ignorance is a fact to which experience can appeal only because it is known."—*The Mind as Pure Act*, p. 29

the contemporary attempts at denying the reality of consciousness lies in their unanimous rejection of the idealistic procedure of assigning a supreme place to consciousness and knowledge. Things, it is urged, are not only independent of knowledge, but knowledge is nothing more than a specific type of relation into which the things enter under certain conditions. 'These things are no doubt variously named in the various theories, but the central contention remains identical in all of them, namely, that there is no consciousness outside or apart from the things and their relations'<sup>22</sup>

The internal paradox of the contemporary theories of consciousness may best be exposed by enquiring whether the elements, the neutral events or the bits of pure experience into which consciousness is reduced are themselves unknown or known. The former alternative would evidently render them undistinguishable from pure nothing or mere naught, and, as such, they must repel all predicates. And in that case they cannot be brought in for explaining anything. The only alternative, therefore, would be to admit that they are objects of knowledge and, as

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<sup>22</sup> The only exception to this general tendency is furnished by Prof. S. Alexander who does not favour the total obliteration of the well-established distinction between the mental and the physical and insists on enjoyment and contemplation as being two fundamentally different types of knowledge none of which can be reduced to the other.

such, presuppose the reality of knowledge or consciousness. The scepticism of Descartes, as is well known, was arrested by the *cogito*, and it is this very fact which is denied here. When I doubt, I cannot doubt that I doubt, and as doubting is a mode of consciousness, it would be paradoxical to doubt, and more so to deny, the reality of consciousness. It is this fact which, as we have seen above, is emphasised by the epistemological priority of consciousness<sup>23</sup>. All objects, no matter what they are in detail, are, in so far as they are appealed to in explanation of something, known objects, and must have their *prius* in "I think," "I know" or "I am conscious." They are, as put by Sureśvara with his characteristic terseness, *ātmapūrvaka*.

The reason, however, why such an apparently self-evident position threatens to degenerate into the relic of an exploded doctrine is that the majority of the modern theories of consciousness have unwittingly pledged themselves to an altogether unwarranted postulate. This postulate, to put it simply, is that consciousness is an object, and as such can be inves-

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<sup>23</sup> In this connection one may recall Professor G. F. Stout's important observation that whatever "is meant, intended, or thought of by the mind, inasmuch as it is meant, intended, or thought of, is the mind's object, whether it be fact or fiction, a mountain or a headache or a geometrical problem," *Manual of Psychology*, fourth edition, p. 8. And they are all objects because they are "Presented to consciousness"—*Ibid.*, p. 99.

tigated and explained in the same way in which we explain all other objects of the world. There have been, no doubt, philosophers and psychologists who have protested against the practice of regarding the self as an object, but they have as a rule ended by depriving the self of all its meaning till it dwindles into a bare zero or, as it is disparagingly put by A. S. Pringle-Pattison, the dot upon the *i* <sup>24</sup>. Thus, Kant and Green, J. Ward and E. Caird have exhibited in their exposition of the self a clear drift to agnosticism. Whether or no some type of agnosticism be inseparable from a true theory of self, the indubitable reality of consciousness provides a brilliant instance of a reality which, though incapable of being known as an object, is yet a foundational fact. This leads us to what we have called before the second feature of the advaita theory of consciousness.

Consciousness, according to the advaita thinkers, being the ultimate principle of revelation, cannot stand in need of a more ulterior principle for its own revelation. That which is the *prius* of the knowable objects cannot itself be conceived as an object among other objects much as the light which reveals everything does not require a second light for its own manifestation <sup>25</sup>. Hence, consciousness is characterised

<sup>24</sup> *The Idea of God*, p. 199

<sup>25</sup> *Samvedanasvarūpavāt samvedanāntarāpekṣā ca na sambhavati yathā prakāśasya prakāśāntarāpekṣāyā na sambhavati tadvat*—*Commentary on the Kenopaniṣad*, 12



as *svayamprakāśa* All things, it is observed,<sup>26</sup> "can be classified as knowledge and knowable, and none except the Vaināśikas would admit a third knowledge which perceives the other knowledge" In fact the distinction between knowledge and the object of knowledge is inevitable in all cases, and "a hundred Vaināśikas cannot make knowledge itself knowable and this is as sure as they cannot revive a dead man" The knowledge of knowledge (*jñānasya jñeyatvam*) or awareness of awareness is, therefore, a psychological absurdity, and even when it is advanced as a logical theory, its untenability may be shown by the evident conflict it comes into with the admittedly valid principle that all objects are presented to consciousness "In so far as consciousness is an object of consciousness," it has been rightly remarked by Prof Gentile, "it is no longer consciousness In so far as the original apperception is an apperceived object, it is no longer apperception"<sup>27</sup>

A lot of mist that has gathered round the problem of self and that of consciousness would, therefore, disappear as soon as we abandon the logical superstition that all that is real must necessarily be a definite object of thought And modern philosophy has already prepared the weapons with

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<sup>26</sup> *Commentary on the Prāśnopanisad*, VI, 2.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6

which one may kill the superstition Berkeley's distinction between 'idea' and 'notion,' Professor S. Alexander's insistence that knowledge in the way of contemplation is altogether different from what we get in the way of enjoyment, James Ward's contrast of the self from the presentations, and lastly G. Gentile's position that the transcendental ego can never in any possible manner be objectified—these are some of the clear instances in which attempts have been made to widen the domain of reality beyond the world of knowable objects. All that is needed now for a just appreciation of the advaita position is to see clearly that it is consciousness and consciousness alone which, though not an object, is yet eminently real. And this would certainly disarm the critics who have been but too ready to identify such a position with that of the agnostic.

It ought to be clear from what has been so far said in elucidation of the advaita doctrine of consciousness that any analysis of consciousness which is undertaken without a distinct comprehension of the essential difference between consciousness on the one hand and the objects that are presented to it on the other is sure to be inadequate and uninformative. That which reveals every object and illumines the entire world of things cannot itself be apprehended as a 'this' or a 'that'. The nearest analogy to it in the physical world is furnished by light which, there-

fore, has been very frequently appealed to in illustrating the peculiar character of consciousness by the Indian as well as the Western thinkers <sup>28</sup> The light which manifests all material things cannot be appropriately said to be here and not there, it is not a particular thing existing by the side of other things; yet it is the condition of the revelation of the particular things <sup>29</sup> Hence arise the difficulties which our psychologists experience in defining consciousness, the reality of which they find it necessary to emphasise, it is something, they say, that can be defined only in terms of itself Hence, again, Yājñavalkya while expounding the nature of the Absolute to Uṣasta insisted on the impossibility of explaining it in the same way in which one shows the cow by holding her by the horn The Self being the seer of sight, as he puts it, it is not capable of being apprehended as an object, as, *e g* , we know the juḡ, etc <sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Among the western philosophers, one may remember here Hamilton's comparison of consciousness with "an internal light" (*Metaphysics* I, p 183) or E Caird's comparison of the self with "the light which reveals both itself and the darkness" (*Hegel*, p 147) The advaita literature abounds in this analogy and frequently refers to the self as the lamp-light or the light of the sun

<sup>29</sup> Another favourite instance of the advaita thinkers is provided by space or *ākāśa* which is too ubiquitous to be determined as 'this' or 'that' or 'here' as distinct from 'there'

<sup>30</sup> *Commentary on the Brh Up*, III 4 1.

The initial assumption of the contemporary theories of consciousness is essentially identical with that of Uṣasta, namely, nothing that cannot be presented as a definite object is real. This very assumption was at the root of the imperfect analysis of experience offered by associationism and presentationism, particularly, it formed the corner-stone of Hume's analysis. And if Hume's search for the self ended in a total failure, the relational theories of consciousness of the present century cannot be expected to fare better while the initial assumption is allowed to stand unchallenged. When, that is, consciousness is defined as a species of function exercised by the organism,<sup>31</sup> or as the cross-section of the universe determined by the specific response of the organism,<sup>32</sup> it is not so much as questioned whether consciousness to which are presented all things including the nervous system can itself be adequately conceived as a presentation or a particular type of thing among other things. The result is that the conscious self which in fact is the presupposition of the organism and its function is lost sight of amidst the congeries of objects, and then ingenious attempts are made to evolve it out of that very organism which

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<sup>31</sup> Prof R B Perry, *Present Philosophical Tendencies*,  
p 322

<sup>32</sup> Prof E. B. Holt *Concept of Consciousness*, p. 170.

when separated from a conscious self is devoid of all intelligible meaning. This procedure, in the words of Śaṅkara, is as preposterous as to think that the colour is seen though there is no eye <sup>33</sup>. When the self is reduced to the complex of the body, etc., it is significantly remarked by Śaṅkara, what is ignored is that "this complex, not being distinguishable from sounds and the rest in so far as it, like them, is of the nature of the knowable, it is not reasonable to attribute the nature of the knower to it" <sup>34</sup>. The colour cannot see the sound, but everything is knowable by the self <sup>35</sup>.

A curious meeting of extremes in this respect is illustrated by the accounts of self advanced by Bradley and Bosanquet. Out of the various meanings of self which Bradley examines in his monumental work, *Appearance and Reality*, there is hardly any

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<sup>33</sup> It is interesting to note that W. James whose analysis has profoundly influenced the realistic theories of our age has sometimes been more careful in this respect than his followers. When the psychologist undertakes an analysis of knowledge, he tells us, he has not only to see the elements and their relations involved in knowledge, but also the relation in which he himself stands to the total situation—*Principles of Psychology*, I, p. 184. When a philosopher analyses or explains an object, it is as natural as it is disastrous to drop himself out of sight.

<sup>34</sup> *Dehādīsaṅghātasyāpi śabdādīsvārūpatvāviśesāt vijñeyatvāviśesāt ca na yuktam vijñātṛtvam*

<sup>35</sup> *Sarvameva tu ātmanā vijñeyam*—*Commentary on the Kathopaniṣad*, IV. 3

reference to the doctrine according to which the self is Consciousness or Knowledge, though such a doctrine has been strongly suggested by the idealists and sometimes ably explained as, *e g*, by Lord Haldane <sup>36</sup> And the reason seems to be that he starts with the same assumption which vitiated the analysis of Hume and the associationists in general <sup>37</sup> Even if it be granted that the self is, "where not hiding itself in obscurity, a mere bundle of discrepancies," <sup>38</sup> it may still be urged that the conscious self *for* which such a bundle exists cannot itself be reduced to a mere bundle of discrepancies The fact is that all his difficulties about the self, as aptly put by Dr Haldar, are "due to his identification of it with its content" <sup>39</sup> And once this identification is assumed to be true, it would be a comparatively easy task to condemn the self as a gross fiction, a mere monster, or a metaphysical chimera This identification remains essentially unchallenged in Bosanquet's

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<sup>36</sup> Compare, for instance, his article in the *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol IX, and also *The Reign of Relativity*, pp 160, 288.

<sup>37</sup> This is particularly evident from the way in which he asks "whether there is anything which may not become an object, and in that sense, a not-self"—*loc cit.*, p. 77. Such remarks as that the main bulk of the elements on the side of the self and on the side of the non-self "is interchangeable" illustrate clearly Bradley's tendency to presentationism.

<sup>38</sup> *Loc cit*, p 104.

<sup>39</sup> *Neo-Hegelianism*, p. 252

theory It is true that he, in spite of his deep sympathy with Bradley's way of thinking, does not go the length of condemning the self as a mere appearance On the contrary, he insists that the significance of mind should be accepted on its own merits and as *sui generis* Yet, the description of the self as a world of experience working itself out towards harmony and completeness, or an active form of totality, or, again, as a living world of content, is strongly suggestive of a fruitless search of the conscious self in the wrong place <sup>40</sup>

The conclusion that emerges out of these considerations is that no theory of consciousness is likely to survive the light of critical thought which leaves unexamined and unchallenged the identification of consciousness with what is presented to it And it further follows that consciousness cannot be dismissed as a mere chimera simply on the ground that it cannot be known as an object Thus, agnosticism and presentationism are the two extremes which should be carefully avoided by a true theory of consciousness The self, which is essentially consciousness for the advaita thinkers, is, therefore, frequently described as different from the known and beyond the unknown, and this character, it is urged,

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<sup>40</sup> Some of his, pregnant remarks on the self are to be found in *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, pp 193, 289, 335 Cf also *The Nature of Mind*, p 125f

does not belong to any other thing <sup>41</sup> That is, as explained by Śaṅkara, the self is different from the entire world of objects but that does not mean that it is unknown <sup>42</sup>

The advaita distinction between the *svayamsiddha* and the *āgantuka* is intended to convey essentially the same meaning. The conscious self, according to the thinkers of this school, is of the nature of an irrepressible reality which is necessarily presupposed by all proof and disproof, and which, therefore, falls beyond the region of logical justification or refutation. The self in this respect is different from the adventitious objects, such as ether. These are not beyond the range of proof (*pramāṇa-nirapekṣa*) or self-established (*svayamsiddha*), the self, on the other hand, is the basis (*āśraya*) of the process of proof, and, consequently, is established prior to the process of proof <sup>43</sup>. You can refute what is adventitious, but not that which is your essential nature, much as the heat of fire cannot be refuted by the fire itself.

Regarded in this light, the conscious self, according to the advaita theory, is an irrepressible reality,

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<sup>41</sup> *Kenopaniṣad*, I, 3

<sup>42</sup> Anandagiri illustrates the point by the help of light which, as we have seen above, is the most favourite analogy with the advaita thinkers.

<sup>43</sup> *Ātmā tu pramāṇādīvyavahārāśrayatvāt prāgeva pramāṇādīvyavahārāt siddhyati* S B, II, 3 7



and what Bradley says with regard to the principle of contradiction may with equal justice be applied to it, namely, that its absolute reality is proved by the fact that, "either in endeavouring to deny it, or even in attempting to doubt it, we tacitly assume its validity" <sup>44</sup>

From the dictum that there is no consciousness, which has so far been considered, to materialism there is but a short way. The latter does not deny the fact of consciousness, but accepting it as an indubitable fact, materialism considers it to be a product of matter. But none the less materialism and the doctrine of no-consciousness meet on the confusion of consciousness with the content, the only difference is that the latter has the merit of drawing the inevitable consequences of the fundamental postulate which has always been at the basis of

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<sup>44</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 120. This in fact contains the essence of Kant's transcendental deduction. The necessity and universality of the principles of the understanding are ultimately proved by the fact that they are the ground of the possibility of experience; that which makes experience possible is for that very reason necessary. In this sense the unity of consciousness, according to Kant, is a transcendental condition of all experience and all knowledge, it is the ultimate presupposition of knowledge. The advaita conception of svayamsiddha essentially conveys the same meaning; and if Bradley condemns the self as a mere appearance while accepting the absolute validity of the law of contradiction, that is probably due to his assumption that the self, if real, must be an objective content.

the former. And this postulate, it may be worthwhile to urge at the risk of repetition, lies in assuming that consciousness is one object among others. Once this assumption has been swallowed, the wood is sure to be lost in the trees, and, consequently, the relational theories of consciousness may very aptly be styled as the natural nemesis of objectifying the subject.

As the purport of the present chapter is to provide an antitoxin for counteracting the ruinous tendency of contemporary thought to what we have called above unhealthy scepticism in respect of the most ultimate principle of thought and existence, a full and detailed examination of the anti-advaita theories of consciousness, which is undertaken below, is not called for in the present context. In fact, all these anti-advaita theories may be ultimately traced back to the root-fallacy which has inevitably led to the relational theory of the present century, and the *reductio ad absurdum* which it illustrates in a very piquant and clear manner ought to force philosophical thought to retrace its steps and come to a clearer consciousness of the limits within which alone scepticism can exercise its healthy influence.

## CHAPTER V

### CONSCIOUSNESS AS A QUALITY

The paradox implicit in the denial of consciousness and in every attempt to translate it in terms of something other than itself shows that here at least we are dealing with a reality that is irrepressible, whatever its ultimate status might be in the democracy of things. When, however, its reality is accepted as unchallengeable, it is still open to us to deny its foundational character and reduce it to a by-product of matter, an epiphenomenon or, in the words of Hodgson, a sort of foam, aura, or melody. In other words, the real strength of the position, generally known as materialism or naturalism, is not weakened to any appreciable degree even if we admit the epistemological priority of consciousness, for logical priority is apparently not incompatible with chronological posteriority. And it may well be imagined that consciousness, though prior to matter in the order of knowledge, is posterior to matter in the order of existence, it is this existential dependence that is emphasised by modern naturalism which, unlike the older forms of materialism, is ready to concede to the idealist's demand for a privileged place for consciousness in the field of knowledge.

The advaita reply to this modern form of materialism will be better understood if we start with Śaṅkara's polemic against that cruder type of materialism associated with the name of Cārvāka in Indian philosophy. Consciousness, according to it, is a by-product of matter and appears, like the intoxicating property of a drug, when the material elements are transformed into the shape of a physical body<sup>1</sup>. The bulk of Śaṅkara's criticism of the materialist's arguments consists in attacking the validity of a number of empirical generalisations by which the materialistic thesis has been sought to be supported. What is, however, of special interest for the modern thinkers is the amazingly idealistic vein in which he asks: What is the nature of that consciousness that is supposed by the materialist to have its origin in the material elements?<sup>2</sup> Consciousness, according to him, must either be perception of the elements and what springs from them, or it must be a quality of the material elements. But in either case we are landed in difficulties. In the former case, the elements and

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<sup>1</sup> *Caitanyam madaśaktivedvijnānam*—S B III 3 53. It is, according to the *Lokāyatikas*, *bhūtaadharmā*—*Commentary on the Pīśnopanīśad*, VI. 2. The materialists are described, in *Sarva-Siddhānta-Saṅgraha* II 5, as those who ascribe everything to Nature as its cause and, consequently, consciousness is supposed to arise in the same way as the red colour is produced by the combination of betel, areca-nut and lime.

• <sup>2</sup> S B III 3, 54

their products are objects of consciousness, and, as such, it cannot be their product, whereas in the latter case, it would be absurd to urge that physical qualities can objectify their own qualities, such as form and colour. It is consciousness alone that can make material things its objects, and it is as absurd to suppose that consciousness that is a quality or product of matter, would yet make material things its objects as to think that fire can burn itself or that a trained acrobat can mount on his own shoulders. Śankara's conclusion, therefore, is that consciousness must be different (*vyatireka*) from the material elements, and the self which is essentially knowledge (*upalabdhi-svarūpa*) is something other than the physical body.

The force of these criticisms, it is evident, depends upon what has now become an idealistic commonplace, namely, first, that consciousness to which is presented every object cannot be identified with an object, and as matter is one of the objects that have a meaning only in so far as they are presented to consciousness, the latter must be entirely different from the former.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Nahī bhūtabhautikadharmena satā caitanyena bhūtabhautikāni viśayakriyāṇāṃ—loc. cit.* It may be interesting to note that Śaṅkara's argument that a thing cannot act upon itself (*svātmani kṛiyā-virodhāt*) has found favour with so accomplished a realist as Prof. Alexander. 'I cannot have knowledge of my mind in the sense of making it an object of contemplation, for that would mean that my mind could act upon itself'—*The Proceedings of Aristotelian Society*, 1910-11, p. 19.

Secondly, that which is an object of consciousness cannot be a precedent factor in the genesis of consciousness. These are the two principles underlying Śaṅkara's criticism,—principles that are also at the root of the idealist's polemic against materialism. Matter, it is remarked by Green, "is an element in a world of consciousness," and only as an element "can any material relation be known," consequently, it would be absurd to explain "consciousness itself as one sort of such material relation, which is as if a physiologist should explain the vital process by some particular motion of a muscle which it renders possible."<sup>4</sup> That is, matter, if it is to explain the rise of consciousness, cannot be merely "the unknown negative of consciousness," cannot be external to consciousness, on the contrary, it is matter as *known* that alone provides an explanatory principle by which "the function of the soul, or anything else, can for us be explained."<sup>5</sup>

Thus Green, like his Indian predecessor, Śaṅkara, offers the same epistemological arguments against the materialistic thesis, and thinks that the knowledge of

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<sup>4</sup> *Works* I, p. 378. The absurdity of the materialist's procedure is illustrated by Green by the feat of Baron Munchausen in swinging himself across a stream by the sleeve of his own coat (*Ibid*, p. 438). This is almost a reproduction of Śaṅkara's illustration of the trained acrobat mounting on his own shoulders.

<sup>5</sup> *Prolegomena to Ethics*, p. 13.

nature cannot be itself a part or product of nature, since "between the consciousness itself on the one hand, and on the other anything determined by the relations under which nature is presented to consciousness, no process of development, because no community, can be really traced"<sup>6</sup> Consciousness, for both Śaṅkara and Green, is, therefore, something *sui generis*, a reality that has none of the characters, belonging to the things that are known or knowable as objects (*visaya*), and, as such, it cannot be a product of the things, that have a meaning only *for* consciousness

It is evident that such a criticism of materialism contains in a nutshell all the baffling puzzles that are responsible for the origin and perpetuation of the idealism-realism controversy in philosophy. Because a realist might still contend that the epistemological priority of consciousness is not inconsistent with its chronological posteriority, and, consequently, consciousness, though born of nature, may yet make nature its object. Such a retort, however, ignores the plain fact that the *quid* anterior to consciousness has no meaning for us, and so cannot be appealed to in explanation of anything, on the other hand, the very chronological order which is here contrasted with the logical order is a particularly conceived order, it is

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<sup>6</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 23

something presented to consciousness, and here lies its efficiency for working as an explanatory principle. This is not, however, the place to assess the realism-idealism controversy in detail, which we have elsewhere attempted. But the important point is that materialism takes that to be the antecedent condition of consciousness which has a meaning only as presented to consciousness, and it matters little whether it is called matter, nature or history. That which makes nature possible, to borrow Kant's classical expression, cannot be a product of nature, and if nature is through and through historical, then, even this history has a meaning only *for* consciousness. The objects of knowledge, Śaṅkara urges, have temporal determinations, such as, past, present or future, but that *for* which these temporal relations have a meaning cannot be itself in time, it is in this sense an eternal presence.<sup>7</sup>

Śaṅkara's criticism of that type of spiritualism which posits the reality of a spiritual soul-substance underlying the fleeting states of consciousness, and of which Locke in the West and the thinkers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school in India have been the most enthusiastic exponents, brings out the logical paradox of another theory of consciousness which has attracted a large number of accomplished thinkers by reason of its simplicity and apparent persuasiveness. Con-

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<sup>7</sup> *Sarradā-vartamāna-svabhāva*—S. B. II 3. 7.



sciousness, according to it, is not essentially a product of matter, it is, on the contrary, a quality supported by, and generated in, a spiritual substance, generally called the self or soul. It starts with the common-sense dualism of mind and matter, and then conceives knowledge as a quality which, though produced by matter, must reside in mind. Such a theory, it will be seen more clearly in the sequel, can be distinguished from materialism with the greatest difficulty, because consciousness is still conceived as a product, and the soul as a substratum transcending or lying beyond the conscious processes. The status of consciousness is still one of dependence, though it has now been transferred from the material to the spiritual substance, the soul may exist without consciousness, but the latter needs a crutch to support itself.

The defect of such a mechanical conception of knowledge is beautifully summarised by Śaṅkara and

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\* The very definition of knowledge as an effect produced by a sort of compact or contract between the eternal objects and the soul has the tendency to reduce the latter to an unconscious material substance. Cp. Gautama *Indriyārthasamnikarśotpannam jñānam—Nyāya-Sūtra* I 1 4. and Locke's description of the production of the ideas in the white paper—*Essay*, Bk. II, Ch. I 3. The perception of ideas according to Locke, is to the soul what motion is to the body, "not its essence, but one of its operations." And this would easily remind an Indian student of the famous statement of Jayanta: *Sacetanaścitā yogāt tadyogena vinā jadalak—Nyāyamanyārī*, Gangādhara Śāstry's edition, Vol III, Part 2, p. 432.

E Caird According to the philosophers of the school of Kaṇāda, it is complained by Śaṅkara, consciousness is produced in the same way as the quality of red is produced in a jar through its connection with fire <sup>9</sup> The psychological attitude of Locke, it is similarly remarked by Caird, leads him to treat the faculty of knowledge merely as an attribute of certain beings in the world, by which they are characterised and distinguished from other beings, so that, *e g.*, as weight is the attribute of a stone, thought is the attribute of man <sup>10</sup>

Thus the application of the categories of substance-attribute and cause-effect to consciousness, in the opinion of Śaṅkara and Caird alike, is the fundamental fallacy of this type of spiritualism <sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Agnighatā, anagajā-rohitādiguṇarat*—S B II. 3. 18. *Pratyamā vastu bhavati ghata uo rāgasamarōgi*—Śaṅkara's *Com on the Kenopaniṣad* II 4,

<sup>10</sup> *The Critical Philosophy of Kant* I, p. 12

<sup>11</sup> How far Sankara's view here has come to be an established tenet of modern idealism may be seen from the emphatic observation of Green that the greatest writer must fall into confusions when he brings under the conceptions of cause and substance the self-conscious thought which is their source—*Works* I, p. 109 Compare also Haldane's remark that the mentalists and the new realists have made the dangerous assumption about the adequacy of the category of substance and thus they treat knowledge as a causal result. *Proc' of the British Academy*, Vol IX

The misapplication of the categories of substance and cause to the conscious principle, which is encouraged alike by the grammatical forms of language and the popular modes of thinking, is one of those philosophical superstitions that win popular approval at the sacrifice of logical profundity by following the natural inclinations of ordinary thought and speech. Descartes' definition of the self as a spiritual substance of which thought is but an attribute, or Gautama's description of knowledge as a quality of the soul (*ātmagaṇa*), would, by reason of its very seductive simplicity, lead to the triple distinction of knowledge, the knower and the object of knowledge, described as *tripuṭi* in Indian philosophy. It has received the certificate of scientific authority at the hands of modern psychology and influenced the epistemological analysis of a large number of philosophers in all ages and countries. When I know the table, there is nothing apparently more simple than to analyse the total situation into the 'I,' the table and the process of knowledge, and the result is that knowledge is conceived as a temporary event arising out of the operation of the table upon the self and inhering in the latter. Thus, Rāmānuja, for instance, in his elaborate criticism of the position of Śaṅkara, appeals to experience in order to discredit the theory of knowledge which takes it to be foundational, and, as such, without a self to support it or an object to

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produce it<sup>12</sup> The very nature of knowledge, it is urged, is to manifest an object to the self, it can as little be its own object as its own subject. Knowledge, therefore, must be taken to be a particular property of the self (*ātmano dharmaviśeṣaḥ*) Similarly, A. S. Pringle-Pattison defies Fichte's imperious tone and asserts emphatically that "to speak of thought as self-existent, without any conscious being whose the thought is, conveys no meaning to our minds. Thought *exists* only as the thought of a thinker, it must be centred somewhere To thought *per se* we can attribute neither existence nor causal activity, and this being so, it can have no place in metaphysics as a theory of Being"<sup>13</sup>

The plethora of paradoxes and inconsistencies hidden beneath the triple division of knower, knowledge, and object known, would have long rendered the psychological analysis a thing of the past, if it had not enjoyed the privilege of being entrenched behind the established usages of our ordinary thought and speech. All the vices of presentationism and the objective attitude of mind are concealed beneath its

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<sup>12</sup> *Sanvit nāma kācit nirāśrayā nirviśayā vā atyantānupalabdhera sambhavati—Sribhāṣya I 1. 1.*

<sup>13</sup> *Hegelianism and Personality*, p. 78, Cp. J. Ward's remark that it is futile to attempt, by means of phrases such as consciousness or the unity of consciousness, to escape the implication of a conscious subject — *Psychological Principles*, p. 40.

outward cloak of simplicity, such as the confusion of the subject-object relation with an inter-objective relation, the error of identifying the knower with mind or sentience, and so on. Historically, whenever the light of critical thought has attempted to pierce through its outer cloak, it has developed in the directions of materialism, scepticism, and agnosticism. Thus, for instance, its materialistic tendency is disclosed in the speculations of Locke and the thinkers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school who found it hard to distinguish the soul-substance from a bit of matter, its sceptical tendency is brought to prominence in the philosophy of Hume and the Buddhists, whose search for a permanent soul ended in the theory of no-soul, and its agnostic tendency manifests itself in that particular theory of self which is represented by James Ward in modern thought and by Prabhākara in Indian Philosophy.

It may be interesting to see how the germ of these apparently conflicting theories is implicit in the psychological analysis of knowledge. If we start on our analysis with the simple fact of perception, it may be said to consist of three factors, namely, the object that is perceived, the percipient, and the process of perception. Out of these, the last factor is apparently the result produced by the object upon the percipient mind. Perception, though a product of the mind-object relation, reveals the object to the mind or the

self, and the self is something over and above the perceptual process which inheres in it <sup>14</sup> As perception cannot fly about without a support, it is natural to refer it to the self to whom is presented the object. Thus, the self becomes a substance of which knowledge is an attribute.

It is easy to see that the place of the self in such an analysis is extremely anomalous. And the puzzles manifest themselves as soon as it is asked how is the self known? As all objects are, *exhypothesi*, presented to the self, and are revealed to the self, the difficulty of knowing the self must be enormous in such a scheme. It is not possible, as rightly urged by Śaṅkara, to know the self in such an analysis, because all its activities, such as hearing, seeing, speaking or reflecting, must be directed only to the objects and not to the self <sup>15</sup>

The first impulse of thought in face of this difficulty would be to regard the self also as a type of object. As objects alone are revealed by know-

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<sup>14</sup> It is not necessary here to insist on the distinction between Mind and Soul, or on the three-fold contact which, in the opinion of the Nvāya thinkers, brings about perceptual knowledge

<sup>15</sup> *Śravanādīkriyāśca svarisayesu eva, na hi mantavyāt anyatra manturmananakriyā sambhavatī*—Śaṅkara's summary at the end of his commentary on *Āitareyaopaniṣad*, Ch. IV.

ledge, the knower also must be one object among other objects. This position is ably defended by the philosophers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, and by their modern successors, such as W. James and Prof. Alexander. The self, therefore, is itself an object of knowledge, and, like all other objects, must be revealed or proved. It is, in other words, a *prameya* among other *prameyas*, as put by the Naiyāyikas. And if this circumstance is combined with the other part of the analysis, namely, that the self is the substance to which knowledge belongs as a quality, the soul-substance becomes indistinguishable from a bit of matter, it is, therefore, openly taken to be material (*jada*) by Jayanta Bhatta, when consciousness is not produced in it.

When, on the other hand, the inconsistency involved in the admission of a self as an object among other objects, to which all objects are yet supposed to be presented, is clearly seen, thought moves forward to another position, namely, that the so-called self which is distinguished by the psychological analysis from all objects is a mere fiction of imagination, whatever exists must be an object, and, consequently, the self that is supposed to be different from the world of objects is a mere nothing like the son of a barren woman. Thus emerges the theory of no-soul that is ably defended by the Buddhists and their modern exponent, Hume.

The sceptical conclusions of the Buddhists and those of Hume, or Prof. E. B. Holt, though arising out of the psychological analysis by an immanent logical dialectic, must compel thought to move forward once more to a more satisfactory position. As the self which is the knower of all objects cannot itself be denied without reducing the psychological analysis to a logical camouflage, and as the self cannot be known as an object, it is something *sui generis* that is known, *not* as an object, but as the subject to which all objects are referred as their inexpugnable basis. James Ward's theory of the Pure Ego which is *within* experience though unknowable as an object, as well as Prabhākara's theory of self that cannot be known as an object, but known only as the subject, are illustrative of the agnostic tendency implicit in the psychological analysis of knowledge.

Even this brief consideration of the apparently simple division of the perceptual situation into three factors indicates some of the puzzles that develop out of its initial assumption. And the penalty which philosophers have to pay for an uncritical alliance with commonsense is clearly shown by the materialistic, sceptical and agnostic tendencies of the present-day philosophy. The very first assumption of the triple division,—namely, that the self can be known under the same conditions as the objects—must, therefore, be challenged; and it is an eminently inter-



esting fact that both Śaṅkara and the modern idealists have actually challenged it. The categories of substance, attribute or causality, they urge, are not the conditions under which the conscious principle can be known. The self and the not-self, it is emphasised by Śaṅkara at the very beginning of his principal work, are as different from each other as light is from darkness. The conditions of objective knowledge, therefore, are inapplicable to the self which, like the light of the physical world, is presupposed by all objects that are ever known. Śaṅkara, consequently, has repeatedly warned those who would seek to know the self against the misapplication to it of the conditions of objective knowledge. What, then, are the conditions of knowledge?

The very first condition of objective knowledge, it is held by Śaṅkara, is (a) that an object should possess a generic unity with specific difference. "An object can be known only when it is differentiated from things other than itself."<sup>16</sup> The lotus, for instance, is known only in so far as it is distinguished by its attributes of blue colour and sweet scent from objects other than itself with which yet it belongs to the same class. The category of substance-attribute, therefore, implies for its application a plurality of things that should at the

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<sup>16</sup> *Evam hi tat jñānam bhavati yadanyebhyaḥ nirvikāṇṭhat.*  
—Commentary on the Taittīyā Upaniṣad II 1

same time belong to the same genus<sup>17</sup> (b) The characteristics of an object, such as generic unity, specific qualities and action, it is urged elsewhere, are the conditions of intelligible discourse on it<sup>18</sup>

How far such observations anticipate the modern idealistic analysis of knowledge needs no particular comment. "Thought is always distinction," it is held by E. Caird, and consequently "a thing which has nothing to distinguish it is unthinkable, but equally unthinkable is a thing which is so separated from all other things as to have no community with them."<sup>19</sup> The necessity of finitude and determinate knowledge, it is similarly remarked by William Wallace, is that everything finite, every 'somewhat,' has somewhat else to counteract, narrow, and thwart it<sup>20</sup> In fact, the Hegelian analysis of determinate knowledge contains the essence of Spinoza's celebrated *determinatio negatio est*, and it is clearly this which

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<sup>17</sup> *Yadā hi anekāni dravyāṇaḥ ekajātīyāni anekaviśeṣanagōḥi tadā viśeṣanasya arthavattvam*—loc. cit.

<sup>18</sup> *Tat anyasmai upadesam sahyam jāti-guna-kriyā-viśeṣanāni*—*Com on the Kṛṣṇarṣad* I, 3 (p also the *Commentary on the Gītā* XIII 12: "Every word employed to denote a thing can do so only in so far as it is associated with a certain *genus*, or a certain *act*, or a certain *quality*, or a certain *mode of relation*. Thus cow and horse imply genera, cook and teacher imply acts, white and black imply qualities, wealthy and cattle-owner imply possession."

<sup>19</sup> *Hegel*, p. 135

<sup>20</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 424

Śaṅkara emphasises in his analysis of objective knowledge. But when one real thing is thus necessarily limited by another, it is equally important to remember that both must belong to one class, they must be *ekajātīyāni* as put by Śaṅkara. Even the Cartesian dualism between the spiritual and the material substance has for its presupposition a class-unity, that is, Descartes could separate them only by unconsciously bringing them under the common concept of substance. Apart from this community they could not be defined in antithetical and mutually conflicting terms. All differences and conflicts, as tersely put by Vācaspati Miśra, would be impossible if there had been difference at their foundation. The judgment, 'intellect is non-eternal,' for instance, cannot conflict with the judgment, 'the soul is eternal'<sup>21</sup>. Hence, conflicts can neither be foundationless (*anāśraya*) nor can they exist when there is difference at the very basis of the conflicting ideas or judgments (*bhinnāśraya*).

As for the second point in Śaṅkara's analysis of knowledge, the development of the doctrine of categories from Aristotle to Kant and Hegel is but an illuminating exposition of the advaita position. Kant's only criticism of the Aristotelian doctrine, as is well known, was that the latter lacked a definite principle

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<sup>21</sup> *Na ca bhinnāśrayā viruddhāh—Brahmasūtra-Śaṅkara-Bhāṣyam* with nine Commentaries, edited by Mm. A. K. Sastri, p. 821.

according to which the exhaustiveness of the list of categories could be secured. A similar criticism may well be levelled against Śaṅkara's haphazard lists of the categories of objective knowledge. Yet, it may perhaps be remarked without running the risk of being accused of an over-zeal that Śaṅkara was essentially expressing the same truth that inspired Kant's doctrine at a later age. The categories of determinate knowledge, though universally valid of all objects that can be ever known and discussed, are yet inapplicable to the conscious principle for which the objects have a meaning. Generic unity, specific difference, act, quality, relation, etc., are supposed by Śaṅkara to be the ultimate conditions of the objects. To these he sometimes adds space, time, causality and non-contradiction.<sup>22</sup> It is obvious that there is no attempt here to deduce these categories from a principle, but Śaṅkara is emphatic that they are not applicable to the conscious principle except through a sort of 'natural confusion' that permeates commonsense.<sup>23</sup>

This important truth about the validity and limits of the categories has frequently escaped the notice of those who are anxious to accommodate their theories to the dictates of unreflective commonsense at the sacrifice of logical insight and depth. The question

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<sup>22</sup> *Deśa-kāla-nimitta-sampattirāḍhaśca*—S B III, 2, 3

<sup>23</sup> This, as we have seen in *Ch II*, was also Green's reading of Kant's theory of self as a thing-in-itself

that inevitably forces itself upon us at this point is whether such an analysis of knowledge can be successfully extricated from agnosticism that is supposed to be associated with the self-theories of Kant and the Neo-Kantians and Neo-Hegelians. This important question, however, must be postponed to a later stage of our discussions with this remark that Śaṅkara's theory of self, when rightly interpreted, does indicate a way out of the paradoxes of agnosticism and scepticism. Presentationism and agnosticism are the two fatal positions that have been historically responsible for the confusion of the real self with the pseudo-egos, and none of these can be fitted into the advaita theory of self. In the meantime, it will be interesting to follow a few steps further Śaṅkara's criticism of the psychological analysis of knowledge.

The fatal paradoxes of the psychological attitude are scarcely seen in their true colour even by some of the penetrating thinkers of our time. Prof. Alexander, for instance, would fain avoid behaviourism in his theory of perception while accepting the commonsense doctrine of compresence of mind with the things it knows. But behaviourism, as it is explained by Prof. Watson and the American neo-realists, is but the logical consequence of the initial supposition that the self is one object among others in the democracy of things. This inevitable result, however, was actually drawn from an identical premise by the philosophers

of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school who fearlessly reduced the self to a bit of matter in the intervals of consciousness, such as sleep or swoon. Even Locke, as is well known, found it difficult to believe that the soul would always think. Once it is accepted that consciousness results from the mechanical relation between the mind and the external thing, the very logic of the situation would lead to the theory that the perception of ideas is to the soul "what motion is to the body, not its essence, but one of its operations"<sup>24</sup> Consciousness in such a theory, as put by Śaṅkara, is an adventitious attribute,<sup>25</sup> and the soul an essentially unconscious thing (*Svataḥ acetanaḥ dravyamātrasvarūpaḥ* )

Śaṅkara's criticism of such a theory must be of fascinating interest for modern philosophy if we start with the simplest type of perceptual knowledge. Knowledge, from the psychological standpoint, we are told by no less a psychologist than W. James, presupposes "two elements, mind knowing and thing known," and to the psychologist, therefore, minds are "objects, in a world of other objects"<sup>26</sup> There are, he admits, some "ultimate puzzles" in the psychological study of knowledge, but the psychologist need trouble himself about them "no more than the

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<sup>24</sup> *Essay*, II 1. 10.

<sup>25</sup> *Agantukaṁ ātmanaścāntanyam*—*S. B.* II, 3. 18.

<sup>26</sup> *Principles of Psychology* I, p. 183.

geometer, the chemist, or the botanist do, who make precisely the same assumptions as he '' This, however, does not prevent W James from describing perception as that process by which the mind 'supplements a sense-impression by an accompaniment or escort of revived sensations, the whole aggregate of actual and revived sensations being solidified or 'integrated' into the form of a percept, that is, an apparently immediate apprehension or cognition of an object now present in a particular locality or region of space ''<sup>27</sup> For such an analysis of perception, he might as well turn to any treatise by the Indian philosophers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school Śrīdhara's analysis, for example, runs as follows.—When we see the colour of a nice fruit, we remember its taste that was experienced on a previous occasion, this remembrance creates in us a desire to eat the fruit, this is followed by an effort for its attainment This effort in its turn produces a modification in the organ of taste in the form of salivation flowing from the roots of the teeth. Now this flow of saliva cannot be due to any intelligence in the sense-organ itself, because each of the two sense-organs engaged in the perception of the fruit perceives one quality only, one perceives the colour while the other perceives the taste, and, consequently, the sight of the colour could not bring about recognition of the

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<sup>27</sup> Quoted approvingly by W James in *Principles of Psychology* II, p 79, from Sully's *Outlines*, p 153

taste. But as a matter of fact, we do find this modification in taste. Hence, there must be some unitary principle apart from the sense-organs which cognises both, and which remembers the taste on seeing the colour <sup>28</sup>

Apart from the comparative value of these descriptions by W James and Śrīdhara respectively, what is to be noted is that the most important point emphasised by both is the factor of integration or unification involved in perceptual knowledge. The only difference is that while Śrīdhara openly refers this factor to the self, James avoids it in the present context, and only remarks that the consciousness of the object, instead of being the consciousness of the few qualities or attributes, "must have the unity which every 'section' of our stream of thought retains so long as its objective content does not sensibly change."

The question which cannot be simply dismissed as an "ultimate puzzle" in an analysis of perception is whether the synthetic character of perception, which both James and Śrīdhara rightly emphasise, admits of a plausible explanation within the presuppositions of their psychological attitude. The problem, in other

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<sup>28</sup> *Nyāyakandalī*, Vizianagram Sanskrit Series, p. 84. A much shorter analysis is given by Praśastapāda who supplies a nice analogy of the self to a person looking through two windows, on p. 70 of the *Bhāṣya*.



words, is that of reconciling the synthetic factor in perception with the initial assumption that the self or mind is one 'object' among other objects. An object clearly implies a subject for whom alone it has a meaning, on the contrary, it would be evidently absurd to suppose that an object perceives another object. In fact, this is roundly admitted by James himself. "The psychologist," he remarks, "stands outside of the mental state he speaks of. Both itself and its object are objects for him."<sup>29</sup> The psychologist, however, James continues, gets easily led to suppose that the thought, which is *of* the object, "knows it in the same way in which he knows it, although this is often very far from being the case." And the result is that "The most fictitious puzzles have been introduced into our science by this means." Indeed, the entire exposition of "The Psychologist's Fallacy" by which James seeks to distinguish the status of the psychologist from the "thoughts" or the "subjective data of which he treats" is a most interesting and instructive recantation of the assumption that the cognitive relation is an inter-objective relation. For it shows clearly that the psychologist cannot be one of those data he studies, and so his relation to them is entirely different from "*their relations to their objects.*" To identify these two types of relations, in

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 196.

the language of Śaṅkara, would be as absurd as to urge that the forms of the physical body may perceive their own forms as well as those of other things<sup>30</sup> To insist that there is no subject, or that the so-called subject is but an object, Śaṅkara contends in another context, is not less preposterous than the statement that "the form is seen though there is no eye."<sup>31</sup>

If then it has to be admitted that all objects have a meaning only for a subject, the next question which must force itself upon every thoughtful mind is What is the nature of that which can account for synthetic knowledge? That every perception involves a synthesis, a unification, solidification or integration is rightly pointed out by James and Śrīdhara alike But this synthesis is evidently incompatible with pan-objectivism as well as materialism The perceptual data come in the form of a successive series, when one is there the other has either disappeared or is yet to come They form, as James aptly puts it, a stream of thought Moreover, each of the sense-organs, as urged by Śrīdhara, perceives only one quality of the perceived fruit. Apparently, therefore, the percep-

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<sup>30</sup> *Rūpādayaḥ anyonyam svam svam rūpaṁ ca vijānīyuh*  
—*Commentary on the Kathopanīśad* IV 3. The whole of Śaṅkara's contentions here may be taken as an effective criticism of pan-objectivism or presentationism dominating the contemporary tendencies of philosophy.

<sup>31</sup> *Commentary on the Prāśnopanīśad*, Question VI.

tion of an object must imply an abiding and relatively permanent principle that does not disappear with the successive 'sections' of thought or the successively apprehended qualities of the fruit. If it be assumed that 'thought' within each personal consciousness is always changing, then, a relatively unchanging principle seems to be all the more necessary for that solidification or integration which perception implies. Howsoever sensibly continuous 'thought' might be, the changing 'sections' cannot integrate themselves into the perception of an object possessing different aspects or attributes. In so far as they change and are in succession, it cannot be explained, as contended by Saṅkara, how the aggregates (*samudāya*) are brought about.<sup>32</sup> In an identical tone it is asked by Green: How can a perpetual flux be collected?<sup>33</sup> The very term 'collection of ideas,' Green urges against Hume's doctrine of universal flux, "is an absurdity" on such a supposition.<sup>34</sup>

In fact, James hides this difficulty in reconciling his theory of ever-changing thought with the unity of the perceived object by insisting, against the associationists, that perception is not "a sum of distinct psychic entities," on the contrary, it is "one state of

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<sup>32</sup> *S B.* II. 2 18

<sup>33</sup> *Works* I, p 178.

<sup>34</sup> *Samudāyabhāvānvapattih*, as put by Sankara

mind or nothing.”<sup>35</sup> Similarly, he agrees with the critics of associationist-psychology in thinking it obvious that “ a bundle of separate ideas would never form one thought at all ” and that “ if things are to be thought in relation they must be thought together, and in one *something*.” But the difficulty of reconciling this unity with the changing thoughts is explained away by assuming that all things that are thought in relation “are thought from the outset in a unity.”<sup>36</sup>

The real difficulty is thus kept exactly where it was left by Hume. And the only available solution of the problem is to be found in such remarks of Śaṅkara or Green as that in order to the successive events being related even in the way of sequence, there must be some unit other than the events, and not passing with them, through relation to which they are related to each other.<sup>37</sup> This abiding principle must be conceived as “ that to which the past is yet present, and present is past ”<sup>38</sup> It is “ a being which is neither event nor series of events, to which there is no before or after ”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, II, p. 80,

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid* I, p. 278.

<sup>37</sup> *Works* II, p. 15

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16

<sup>39</sup> *Works* I, p. 127. Cp. Śaṅkara's notion of the self as an eternal presence—*SB* II, 3, 7,

The philosophers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school escape from James's perplexities by their admission of a permanent principle over and above the sense-data. But as the materialistic implications of pan-objectivism are brought out in their analysis more clearly than in that of James, the paradoxes here are as insoluble as in the latter. For Locke, there is nothing to exclude the possibility of even matter being endowed with the power of thinking. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thinkers, on the other hand, have been unanimous in their contention that the perception of an object implies the synthetic function of a permanent principle. Neither matter nor the sense-organs, it is held, can be the self, because these cannot account for the synthesis involved in the perception of an object through different senses. The object which I have seen through the eyes, it is argued by Vātsyāyana, is now touched through the skin, and these two types of sense-knowledge, the visual and the tactual, refer to the same object as well as to the same self.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, as we have seen above, Praśastapāda as well as Śrīdhara see clearly that perception implies a permanent self which holds together the colour and the sound reported respectively by two different sense-organs, the self, in other words, must be a synthetic principle (*ubhayadarśī*)

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<sup>40</sup> *Ekavisayoḥ cemou pratyayoḥ ekakartṛkoḥ pratibandhīyete*—Commentary on the Nyāya-Sūtra III, 1, 1.

Thus, they insist, on the one hand, that matter has no synthetic function; on the other hand, consciousness is supposed by them to be a quality generated in an essentially unconscious soul-substance which, as we have seen, is unreservedly declared material (*jāda*) by Jayanta, when it is not connected with consciousness. But how can these two aspects of the theory be reconciled with each other? It may either be said that the unconscious soul possesses the synthetic function, or that it belongs to consciousness. In the former case, the soul cannot be distinguished from matter, and then all efforts to prove their incompatibility would be futile, the latter alternative, on the other hand, would amount to the admission that the synthetic function belongs to an intermittent quality of the soul, and not to its essential nature. Such a transient consciousness cannot evidently discharge the function of a synthetic principle which, therefore, as they themselves see it clearly, must be a permanent principle. Thus the possibility of synthesis remains unexplained within the assumptions of the psychological theory of self. The transience of consciousness and the permanence of the unconscious soul-substance are the two fatal assumptions which must ruin the psychological analysis of perception. The simplest perceptual knowledge implies a synthesis of recognition, as rightly urged by Kant, it is equally realised by the thinkers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school. But

while the former sees it clearly that such a synthesis implies a permanent conscious principle which he calls *transcendental apperception*, the latter leave it unexplained and unreconciled with their initial assumptions

It is evident then that neither James nor Vātsyāyana and Śrīdhara have really explained the synthetic character of perception, though they have rightly stressed it in their respective theories. Synthesis, consequently, remains an inexplicable mystery, as incompatible with the conception of self as a stream of thought as with that of an unconscious permanent soul supporting impermanent knowledge-events. James, like the philosophers of the *Vijñāna-rāda* school of Buddhism, seeks to reduce the self to a 'passing thought' thus reminding us of the "flux of perceptions" of Hume on the one hand, and of the "*Vijñāna-santāna*" of the Buddhist, on the other. The prospect of reconciling such a theory of self with the unity of the object of perception appears to be as far as ever. The thinkers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, on the other hand, sought, like their modern descendants, to escape from the puzzles by insisting on a permanent principle, but this partial solution lost all its logical stability on account of the objectivist and materialistic implications of their theory of self. No aggregation or combination is explicable, as tersely put by Śaṅkara, without the supposition of a *conscious*

*permanent principle* <sup>41</sup> Neither a material substance, however permanent it might be, nor 'passing thoughts,' howsoever immaterial they might be, would account for aggregation

If we now remember the common assumption of the doctrine of soul-substance and that of a changing self, we may easily detect the dialectic of thought underlying both and adjudicate upon their relative merits. This common assumption, as we have seen, is that the self is one object among other objects. Once this step is taken, thought must move almost automatically in accordance with the first principle of determinate knowledge which, as formulated by Śaṅkara, is the principle of generic unity with specific difference <sup>42</sup> Each object, therefore, must not only be brought under the common notion of 'object,' but it must have some specific attributes to distinguish it from the other objects. It matters little whether the distinguishing attribute is selected from the world of matter or that of mind, whether, *i.e.*, it is a physiological response as in behaviourism or knowledge inhering in the soul as urged by the spiritualists. In either case, the particular 'object' which is called the self must be brought under the category of substance-

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<sup>41</sup> *Samudāyāpiṣṭh, samudāyabhāvanūpapattih, kutah, samudāyīnām acetanatrōt . . . anyasya ca kasyacet cetanasya . . . sthīrasya saṅhantuh anabhyupagamāt—S B. II. 2, 18.*

<sup>42</sup> *Supra*, p 145



attribute, and so far the logic of the position remains identical. The substance in such a theory, again, must be something in addition to the attribute, and if the attribute is taken to be knowledge or consciousness the substance must inevitably be an unconscious 'something'. Thus pan-objectivism leads necessarily to materialism.

James avoids the materialistic consequence of pan-objectivism by an evidently arbitrary refusal to apply the category of substance-attribute to the fleeting 'thoughts'. This is, however, arbitrary, for if the mind studied by psychologists is one object in a world of other objects, if it is, in other words, *primus inter pares*, its claim to the democratic status can be maintained only through its differentiating attributes. There can be no generic unity without specific difference, and plurality can be sustained only by specific qualities.<sup>43</sup>

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\* <sup>43</sup> It may be noted here that pan-objectivism as well as subjectivism meet on a common error. Whether all things are supposed to be mere objects or mere subjects, we commit in either case the fallacy of accepting only one-half of the first principle of determinate knowledge. James no doubt avoids the difficulty of Hume and the Buddhists by implicitly assuming a physical world which is different from the 'minds' that know it. But he saves his theory from the materialistic nemesis of spiritualism by refusing to make explicit what is implied by the distinction.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONSCIOUSNESS AND CHANGE

Our examination of the current theory of perception, in the last chapter, has brought out some of its imperfections. Perceptual knowledge, we have seen, implies a permanent conscious principle without which its synthetic character remains inexplicable. This conscious principle, we have further seen, cannot be brought under the category of substance-attribute, or, as a matter of fact, any of the categories of objective knowledge. This will be made more clear and convincing by a further examination of the factors in perception.

The different qualities of the object, such as colour, taste, smell, etc., are apprehended one after another as so many isolated data of perception, each has its appropriate sense-organ through which alone it can affect the mind. That is, each sensible quality throws the mind into a particular type of change, so that the mental modification stimulated by the colour is different from that produced by the sound. These mental modifications are so many events in the life-history of the individual, which begin and cease, and, as such, may be distinguished from the external thing that endures and persists through different moments.

of time It does not matter in the least whether these modifications are called changes in the mind, modifications of sensibility or states of *antahkaraṇa*, provided it is remembered that they are perishing existences, while the thing apprehended through them has a unity, identity and permanence "The act of thinking," it is remarked by Prof Stout, "is an event which happens in our own mental history, the object is a meaning which is the same whenever it is apprehended"<sup>1</sup> These acts of apprehending, it is further contended, are distinct events in the time-order of our conscious life, but "the sensible quality is not an event in the history of my experience at all"

The most important thing to be remembered here is that even the 'acts of apprehending' are real events in a real time-order, though they belong to the subjective side of our experience This distinction between the mental events and the permanent objects brings out all the more clearly the necessity of postulating a permanent principle for explaining the synthesis in perception—a principle that does not pass away with the passing mental events but holds them together into the concept of one object It is from this standpoint that Green complains about the mischievous implications of "certain current phrases of modern psychology" "We speak of consciousness univer-

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<sup>1</sup> *Manual of Psychology, Fourth Edition*, p 101.

sally, without qualification or distinction, as a succession of states; and the figure of the stream is the accepted one for expressing the nature of our spiritual life ” On a more careful reflection, however, it will appear that though the figure of the stream may be applicable to “the relation between stages of the process by which the knowledge or perception is arrived at,” yet it is wholly inapplicable to the conscious principle implied in “knowledge even of the most elementary sort ”<sup>2</sup> Because, “it is essential to every act of knowledge that the related facts should be present together in consciousness ” Green’s thesis, therefore, is “Our experience has two characteristics of which neither admits of being reduced to or explained by the other On the one hand it is an order of events in time, consisting in modifications of our sensibility On the other hand it is a consciousness of those events—a consciousness of them as a related series, and as determined in their relations to each other by relation to something else, which is from the first conceived as other than the modifications of our sensibility ”

Green’s analysis of knowledge is in fact inspired by that of Kant Recognition for Kant, as is well known, can be explained only by postulating an identical consciousness without which “I should never

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<sup>2</sup> *Prolegomena, Fifth Edition*, p 64.

be conscious of the various members of the series as forming one whole ''<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, it must be realised that "in the flux of inner phenomena there can be no unchanging or permanent self " But, on the other hand, it is equally important to remember that "no knowledge whatever, no unity and connection of objects, is possible for us, apart from that unity of consciousness which is prior to all data of perception, and without relation to which no consciousness of objects is possible ''<sup>4</sup> "This pure, original, unchangeable consciousness," Kant admits clearly, "I call *transcendental apperception* "

Kant's distinction between the "flux of inner phenomena" on the one hand and the identical consciousness which is prior to perceptual data, on the other, provides Green with a very important clue to a right analysis of perception Perception, for him, involves at least a changing principle as well as an unchanging principle The "successive states," we are told, "may be represented as waves of which one is for ever taking the place of the other " "In this sense different states of knowledge succeed each other in the individual, but not so the manifold constituents of that which in any act of knowledge is present to his mind as the object known; For a known object, as

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<sup>3</sup> Watson's *Selections*, p 60.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* , p. 62.

known, is a related whole, the members are necessarily present together, . . . None is before or after another ''<sup>5</sup>

The contrast of such an analysis of perception with what is supplied by Locke, James, and the modern psychologists on the one hand, and Vātsyāyana, Śrīdhara, and Rāmānuja, on the other, is too clear to require any elaborate explanation. The psychological analysis leaves the synthetic character of perception inexplicable for want of the important distinction, drawn by Kant and Green, between the changing and the unchanging principles which every concrete perceptual knowledge involves. And what must be eminently interesting for a modern philosopher is the similarity of Green's analysis with that of Śaṅkara. In fact, some of the trenchant remarks of the former on the theories of Locke, Lewes and Spencer might easily be taken for Śaṅkara's criticism of the thinkers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school. No perception, according to the 'advaita' analysis, is possible without the function of two distinct principles, one of which undergoes modifications while the other remains unchanging and unmodified. The former is called *antaḥkaraṇa*, *citta*, or *buddhi*, and the latter *cit* or *bodha*. When I know, say the tree or the table, the unconscious *antaḥkaraṇa* assumes, or is modified

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 65.

into, different forms corresponding to the different aspects of the object that is known. But these mental modifications (*antaḥkaraṇa-vṛttis*) do not by themselves constitute knowledge, left to themselves, they are unconscious, and as such, incapable of combining themselves into the concept of a table or a tree. It is only in so far as consciousness (*cit*), which is other than the modes, holds together simultaneously the fragmentary mental modes that come in succession,—which therefore are aptly represented by Green as waves, and by the advaita thinkers as *vṛtti-pravāha*—that there is knowledge of the table. It is not necessary for our present purpose to enter into the confusing details about the origin of *antaḥkaraṇa* from *ajñāna* or about the number of functions that are ascribed to it by different thinkers of the advaita school. Nor need we defend the apparently absurd notion of the *antaḥkaraṇa* going out to the object through the senses and assuming the form of the object in the same way in which water runs through the drain to the basin and takes on the form of the latter, though such a defence is sometimes supposed to promote the cause of comparative philosophy.<sup>6</sup> The really important point for a correct analysis of perception is furnished by the 'advaita' distinction between *antaḥkaraṇa* and *cit*, the unconscious changing principle

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<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Prof. D. M. Datta's *The Six Ways of Knowing*, p. 61

and the conscious unchanging principle, and it is important because their confusion has been mainly responsible for the imperfections in the psychological theories of perception in the West as well as in India.

In the light of these observations it will now be easy to appreciate the 'advaita' distinction between eternal knowledge and the fragmentary knowledge that is generally supposed to arise through the relation of the sense-organs to the external things. That our knowledge is transient and fleeting seems at first sight to be too obvious to call for any elaborate philosophical defence. I know the chair and then I know the table; I perceive the book on my table and then I perceive the green meadow stretching far and wide before my vision. When the chair is perceived, the table, the book and the meadow are not perceived by me, and similarly, when I perceive the meadow my knowledge of the chair has already disappeared. Thus our knowledge has the appearance of coming in the form of a stream of units that are constantly replacing one another. A further evidence of the fleeting character of knowledge is apparently furnished by sleep, swoon, and those intervals in the flow of psychical current that are found in hysteric patients. Do not these obvious facts of our life bear unquestionable testimony to the fragmentary character of knowledge and consciousness?



This obvious view is subscribed to by a large number of accomplished thinkers of the modern time as well as of an earlier age. If knowledge had been eternal, it is urged by Rāmānuja, it would also appear as eternal, but it does not in fact appear as such.<sup>7</sup> On the contrary, what is obvious is that perceptual knowledge is a temporal event, it appears as conforming to the modes of time (*kāla-paricchinnaṭayā pratīteh*), so that the knowledge of a jar, for instance, comes into existence only so long as the jar is before us, and it goes out of existence as soon as the jar is removed from our presence. Similarly, Kaṇāda and his followers, it is pointed out by Śāṅkara, accept the view that consciousness is adventitious, for, "if the soul were of eternal intelligence, it would remain intelligent in the states of deep sleep, swoon, and spirit-possession."<sup>8</sup> These arguments of Rāmānuja and Kaṇāda against eternal knowledge are also at the root of Bradley's reluctance to admit anything like an eternal principle. "It is hard indeed to fix any limit to the self's mutability." And, "if we add the requirement of psychical continuity, have we advanced much further? For obviously it is not known, and there seems hardly any way of deciding, whether the psychical current is without any break. Apparently, during sleep or other-

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<sup>7</sup> *Nityam cet sanvedanam svataḥsiddham, nityamityeva pratīyeta, na ca tathā pratīyate—Śrībhāṣya, loc cit*

<sup>8</sup> *S. B. II, 3 18*

wise, such intervals are at least possible, and if so, continuity, being doubtful, cannot be used to prove identity."<sup>9</sup>

The problem of personal identity must be postponed to a later stage of our discussions. The question that is important at this place is whether the most elementary type of perception can be explained without postulating a permanent conscious principle over and above the changing mental modes Śāṅkara, like Kant and Green, as we have seen, is emphatic that perception implies such a synthetic principle. It will be interesting to follow his arguments, advanced from a slightly different standpoint. There are, he remarks significantly, two types of knowledge, the transitory and the permanent; of these the latter is the presupposition of the former<sup>10</sup> "If the perceptual knowledge were not distinct from the eternal knowledge of the self," Śāṅkara remarks, "then the blind man could not see blue, yellow, etc., in his dreams." It must be noted, in order to do justice to this piece of argument, that the question raised here is not one of origin of the dream<sup>11</sup> Whatever might have been

<sup>9</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 70.

<sup>10</sup> *Nityātmano dr̥stih vāhyāntyadr̥steh grāhikā*—Summary at the end of *Āitareyaopaniṣad* III

<sup>11</sup> On the question of the origin of dreams, the list of modern theories may be enlarged by the conflicting theories held by the Indian philosophers. A short list of the latter is given by Dr J N Sinha in his *Indian Psychology*, Ch. XVI.

their causes, our dream experiences are, after all experiences of a type, and as such, imply a conscious principle as much as our waking experiences. If then all knowledge had been of sensuous origin, as the empiricists have contended, dreams would remain a mystery, as here there is admittedly no contact of the senses with the external things. Empirical knowledge (*loukikīdr̥ṣṭih*), it is observed in another context, is conditioned by mental modifications arising from the contact of the senses with sensibility, it appears and disappears.<sup>12</sup> Eternal knowledge (*paramārthikā dr̥ṣṭih*), on the contrary, does not appear and disappear, as it is the very essence of the knower (*draṣṭuh svarūpatvāt*), much as heat and light form the essence of fire. In this sense, again, eternal knowledge may also be called the knowledge of the knower (*draṣṭurdr̥ṣṭih*), as distinct from sense-knowledge. There can be no destruction of the "knower's knowledge," nor can it be an object of sense-knowledge. The fleeting and fragmentary knowledge born out of the senses is something like a shadow (*praticchāyā*) of the "knower's knowledge" and, consequently the latter which is in fact the pervading principle of the former cannot itself be revealed by sense-knowledge. Śaṅkara concludes his explanation of eternal knowledge with the remark, which will remind a modern

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<sup>12</sup> *Cakṣuḥsaṅyuktāntahkaranavṛttih, sā kṛyate iti jāyate vinaśyati ca—Com. on the Brh. Up. III. 4. 2*

student of the indignant tone of Fichte's observations in a similar context, that those who cannot understand the difference between what is commonly called the knower (*drastā*) and the knower of knowledge (*dṛṣterdraṣṭā*), and interpret the latter also as implying an agent of which knowledge is an activity, exhibit only their intellectual weakness (*buddhidourbalyam*).

It is evident that Śaṅkara, in these arguments, is anxious to prove the reality of a foundational type of knowledge which is the presupposition of our fragmentary perceptual knowledge. It is called, indifferently, the "knower's knowledge" or the knower of perceptual knowledge. The difficulty here is due to the very nature of our discursive thinking which understands everything through distinctions and differentiations and Śaṅkara is fully alive to them. When we talk of the self, he remarks, we must realise that its nature is such that "all distinctions of speech and thought are merged in it"<sup>13</sup>. That is, when I distinguish between two things, I cannot myself be one of the terms of the relation of distinction. He who would try to understand the self through relational categories,—such as existence and non-existence, one and many, qualified and unqualified, etc.—is thought by him to be similar to a man who "would desire to

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<sup>13</sup> *Vānmanasayorbhedā yatra ekam bhavati—Com on the Aitareyopaniṣad, loc cit.*

step up the sky as if he climbed a flight of steps, or trace the path of fishes in water and of birds in the sky.<sup>14</sup> The self, in other words, being the basis of all distinctions, it cannot be an object of discursive knowledge. And the result is that even when we try to indicate the self as foundational knowledge, it is impossible completely to get rid of distinctions, represented in such phrases as "knower's knowledge," or "knower of knowledge," etc. But, then, we must bear in mind that the foundational knowledge being the presupposition of all distinctions, these phrases, though inevitable for every attempt to indicate what is beyond all distinctions, are not to be taken literally.

The point we are discussing here is so important for understanding Śaṅkara's theory of self that a short reference to the explanation offered by the celebrated author of *Bhāmati* may not be out of place. Though there is no difference in the innermost self, says Vācaspati Miśra, yet we impose difference upon it and use such phrases as 'the consciousness of the person,' etc.<sup>15</sup> This, however, is nothing but an accommodation of what is in fact distinction-less to the requirements of our discursive knowledge, the difference, as

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<sup>14</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> *Yadyapi pratyagātmanī 'nānyā prathā asti, tathāpi bhedopacārah, yathā puruṣasya caitanyam' iti—Brahma-Sūtra-Śaṅkara-Bhāṣyam*, with nine Commentaries, edited by Mm. A. Sastri, p. 406.

put by him, is a mere imposition. (*upacāra*). The conscious self, he continues, must necessarily be presupposed as given in an immediate, non-objectifying, experience, for, without this self-experience no other things can be experienced, and, consequently, the whole world would be immersed in darkness <sup>16</sup> It is clear that Vācaspati insists on the one hand that there is no difference within the conscious principle or self, though we are obliged to think and speak about it as if there were differences in it. On the other hand, he is equally anxious to point out that such an undifferentiated consciousness is not a mere myth, but given in a sort of immediate experience which is the necessary presupposition of all other experience.

As a help to a proper appreciation of Śaṅkara's views, it may be useful to remember here some of the permanent contributions the modern idealists have made to a sound theory of knowledge. We have acknowledged these contributions at different places, but they are so clearly put by the late Lord Haldane that an entire passage may be quoted at this place. Knowledge, he urges, creates its own distinctions within itself, and excepting through it and in its terms there is no intelligible significance to be found for either the self that knows or for the objects to which

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<sup>16</sup> *Avakṣyam cidātmā aparokṣa abhyupatevyah, tadapratihāyāḥ sarvasyāprathanena jagadāndhyaprasaṅgāt*—*Ibid.*, p. 411.

it is related Knowledge may thus turn out to be the prius of reality, and, like the *Élan* of Bergson or *Will* of Schopenhauer, itself the ultimate reality, capable of expression in no terms beyond its own, inasmuch as creation is meaningless outside its scope Things and our reflections on them must alike belong to it If, indeed, the *Élan* or the *Will* is intelligible it can, in this view, be so only as the result of distinctions made within knowledge of some sort, and it must fall within it as its own mere form and not as reality independent of it It may then appear in the end that it is only by what is called abstraction, by a separation made in reflection for limited ends and standpoints of a secondary and provisional nature, that knowledge has even come to seem to be anything else than a foundational fact, the ultimately real that can be rendered only in its own terms<sup>17</sup> Hence, again, knowledge must not be regarded as a "property of a substance, it cannot be called a property even of the subject It is the subject itself in its essential aspect"<sup>18</sup> Serious difficulties in the analysis of knowledge, it is remarked elsewhere, "seem to have arisen as soon as I fixed on the notion that my mind was a kind of thing, and that knowledge was a property of this thing"<sup>19</sup> It is recommended, there-

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<sup>17</sup> *The Reign of Relativity*, p. 150

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 200

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 150

fore, almost in the very language of Vācaspati, that we must abandon the habit of thinking of "consciousness as a property, the consciousness *of* a person."<sup>20</sup>

This passage, it must be admitted, is on the whole an illuminating exposition of Śaṅkara's contentions about the "knower's knowledge" and the "knower of knowledge." The self, when regarded in this respect, is the seer of sight or the very essence of the knower; and, consequently, it cannot be the object of the faculties of knowledge, as the term 'knowledge' is generally understood. In other words, the self in this sense is unseen (*adr̥ṣtam*), unheard of (*aśrutam*), not an object of reasoning (*amatam*), and not an object of knowledge (*avijñātam*).<sup>21</sup> It is similarly said at the beginning of the *Kenopaniṣad* to be the ear of the ear, mind of the mind, tongue of the tongue, life of the life, and eye of the eye. In this sense, again, it is described as being distinct from the known and above the unknown.<sup>22</sup>

The apparent contradiction in this definition of the self as both known and unknown is resolved by Śaṅkara in his explanation of the famous text of the

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p. 320

<sup>21</sup> *Com. on the Brh Up* III, 8, 11

<sup>22</sup> *Anyadevatadviditāt atha aviditādadhī*. Lest it should be confused with a transcendent Absolute, Śaṅkara remarks that "it is clear that none other than one's own self can be distinct from both the Known and the Unknown."



*Kenopanisad* II. 4, where it is described as that which is "known in respect of every state of consciousness," or *pratibodhariditam*. If the self be not known at all, it may be asked whether there is not a contradiction in holding at the same time that it is known. Here he starts with a significant distinction between the mental states involved in ordinary knowledge (*bouddhāḥ pratyayāḥ*) and the self for which all mental states become objects (*sarve pratyayā viśayībhavanti yasya*). The self, he says, is the subject in relation even to the mental states, and so must be essentially Consciousness which, revealing as it does every one of the mental states, is indirectly indicated by them.<sup>23</sup> "There is no other way," it is emphatically said, "in which the innermost self can be known." The meaning evidently is that though the foundational knowledge or Consciousness cannot be known as an object, yet, its reality cannot be denied because it is implied by each and all mental processes indifferently. To put these contentions in terms of modern philosophy, the self, though not known as an object, is yet known as the transcendental ground or the ultimate logical implicate of all mental processes involved in knowledge. There could be no knowledge of a given object, such as the table or the chair, if we had not

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<sup>23</sup> *Sarvapratyayadarśi vicchaktiśvarūpamātrah pratyaya-  
iva pratyayesu avīśitatayā lakṣyate.*

postulated the reality of a foundational type of knowledge which forms the background of the fragmentary knowledge that is produced piecemeal as the mind comes into relation with a particular aspect of the object, such as, its colour. The foundational knowledge, therefore, does not itself come into existence or goes out of existence with the origin and disappearance of the particular knowledges which, as put by Green, come as waves. On the contrary, perception requires sensibility as well as consciousness neither of which, to put it again in the language of Green, admits of being reduced to or explained by the other.

We are now in sight of the fallacy which vitiates the psychological analysis of perception, as offered by W. James, Śrīdhara or Rāmānuja. The fallacy, to put it shortly, is that of confusing sensibility with consciousness. This leads to a mistaken transference of the characteristics of the former to the latter. Even the modifications of sensibility, as Green rightly urges, cannot account for perception, the mere '*vṛtti*'s, as put by the advaita thinkers, do not explain knowledge. The fallacy, therefore, is characterised by the latter as one of confusion between *vṛtti* and *bodha*. This fallacy in its turn may be traced to the assumption that the self is a substance and knowledge is a property, with its corollary that the self is a bit of matter—a position which is occupied by able thinkers who cannot rise above the linguistic exigencies.

The account of *vikalpavṛtti* given in the Yoga philosophy illustrates very aptly the confusions created by linguistic forms in the way of philosophical thinking. It is defined as *vastuśūnyatvepi śabdajñāna-māhāmyanibandhano vyavahārah*—*Yoga-Bhāṣya* on the Sūtra 9. Literally translated, it means the mental modification created by the power of linguistic knowledge even in the absence of a corresponding reality. That is, the grammatical forms often mislead us into believing in realities which do not exist in the same forms. In illustration of these confusions, Vyāsa refers to a few popular modes of thought, such as, 'consciousness is the real nature of the self,' 'the arrow is staying,' 'the self is devoid of the quality of origin.' Thus, when it is said that consciousness is the real nature of the self, we are apt to think in the same form in which we think of the cow as belonging to Carra. The remedy suggested by Yoga philosophy is called *śabda-sanketa-smṛti-pariśuddhi*, that is, the process of purging the mind of the memory of linguistic associations. And this is supposed to be a necessary precondition of the highest type of knowledge, called *nirvikalpa*. Similarly, it is said in *Ajñānabodhinī*, 34, a work generally attributed to Śankara, that such a phrase as 'the knowledge is yours' is to be interpreted as knowledge is yourself, much as the phrase 'the head of Rāhu' means that the head is Rāhu itself. Śankara, therefore, would agree that there are '*vikalpavṛtti*'s in our knowledge, but he would not perhaps accept the Yoga method of removing them.

This must lead us naturally to examine the doctrine of self as dynamic, or as a growing entity. The theory of evolution which is the ruling conception of our age has been pressed by many thinkers into their

own service, and the result is that it is widely believed to be a valuable key to a scientific theory of mind. The human mind, it is supposed, is the outcome of a long and highly specialized evolution.<sup>24</sup> It is true that there is still some amount of vagueness in the minds of the present-day thinkers in respect of the exact nature of the evolution which has given birth to the human mind, whether, *z e*, it is emergent, epigenetic, and creative, or it is simply a process that brings out what was already latent in the growing universe. Similarly, difficulties are felt in taking it as either teleological or mechanical, or purely indeterminate. But it is agreed on all hands that the function of a philosopher, as aptly put by Bergson, is to see "the material world melt back into a simple flux, a continuity of flowing, a becoming." And then only will it be possible for him to discover "real duration there where it is still more useful to find it, in the realm of life and of consciousness."<sup>25</sup> This is how Bergson concludes his monumental work which opened with the remark "The existence of which we are most assured and which we know best is unquestionably our own," but what we find here is that I change without ceasing, and that "there is no feeling, no idea, no volition which is not undergoing

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<sup>24</sup> Prof. L. T. Hobhouse, *Mind in Evolution*, p. 369.

<sup>25</sup> *Creative Evolution*, p. 390.

change every moment if a mental state ceased to vary, its duration would cease to flow."

It is clear even from these short remarks of one of our influential thinkers how the modern theory of consciousness moves in the Humian atmosphere of pure flux and becoming. The world has no place for anything like a foundational consciousness which Śaṅkara and Haldane supposed to be indispensable for every type of knowledge. It may be, therefore, useful to remember some of the main contentions of Śaṅkara against the theory of flux, these contentions, it will be interesting to see, contain essentially an Indian answer to Hume which is not less effective than what was returned by Reid or Kant.

Śaṅkara in his principal work starts on a refutation of the theory of universal becoming by condemning the doctrine of the Vaiśeṣika school as semi-nihilistic. The appropriateness of this epithet is nowhere more clear than in its theory of fleeting consciousness which is supposed to arise out of the contact of the external things with the soul-substance through the sense-organs and the atomic mind. The psychological theory, as we have remarked above, can be distinguished from materialism only with the greatest difficulty, we may now see that it gravitates in two directions. In so far as consciousness is supposed to arise from the mechanical contact of things that are essentially unconscious, it points to materialism, on the other hand,

its theory of fleeting consciousness points unmistakably to the theory of an ever-changing series of momentary flashes of consciousness defended in the Yogācāra school. It is true that consciousness is taken to be a little more permanent in the Vaiśeṣika school than in the Yogācāra school, but the situation does not materially change so long as it is supposed to appear and disappear like the changing things of the world <sup>26</sup>

Thus, it is apparent that the psychological analysis of knowledge has latent in it the germ of a theory of consciousness which may be easily developed into the positions of either Hume or Bergson, or, again, that of the Buddhists. As Hume's destructive criticism of the categories of identity and causality may still be regarded as an important contribution to the philosophy of becoming, it will be useful to devote a little space to the consideration of his arguments.

In respect of the self, Hume's insistence on the theory of the self as a series is but a special application of his general thesis that nothing exists except the flux of 'perceptions.' Like the Buddhist idealists, he will not admit the reality of any permanent principles anywhere in the universe, and as the self is

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<sup>26</sup> It may be observed that we do not dispute Thibaut's interpretation of the term semi-nihilistic by which, according to him, Śāṅkara only referred to the doctrine of difference of size constituting difference of substance. Our contention is that the term is more appropriately applied to the Vaiśeṣika theory of fleeting consciousness.

something within the universe, it must be as dynamic and changeful as the rest. "Some philosophers," Hume starts his discussion of personal identity with the remark, "imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our self, that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence, and are certain, beyond the evidence of a demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity." Hume looks about for such a self and remarks that "if any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, through the whole course of our lives, since self is supposed to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable. Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It cannot therefore be from any of these impressions, or from any other, that the idea of the self is derived, and consequently there is no such idea."<sup>27</sup>

In appreciating the similarity of such a theory of self to that of the Buddhist idealists, we must remember that the ideas (*viññānas*) and the mental dispositions (*vāsanās*), according to them, are mutually conditioned by each other almost in the same way in which Hume's ideas and impressions are conditioned by each other. In the absence of any external stimulant, these mental elements have to be

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<sup>27</sup> *Treatise* I, IV, VI.

explained in a similar way by Hume as well as by the Buddhist idealists. The order in which they are derived from each other is described by Hume in a famous passage of his *Treatise* "An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain, of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea. This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impression of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be impressions of reflection, because derived from it. These again are copied by the memory and imagination, and become ideas, which perhaps in their turn give rise to other impressions and ideas, so that the impressions of reflection are not only antecedent to their correspondent ideas, but posterior to those of sensation, and derived from them."<sup>28</sup> Thus Hume accepts the essentials of the Buddhist's conception of the relation between the *viññānas* and the *vāsanās* as mutually determining each other. It is, as the Buddhists put it, the relation of mutual causation like the relation of the seed (*bīja*) to the sprout (*aṅkura*).

It is true that there is here an apparent break in the similarity in so far as the Buddhists accept the doctrine of dependent origination (*Pratītyasamut-*

<sup>28</sup> *Treatise* I 1. 2



*pāda*), while Hume's chief contribution lay in a destructive criticism of the causal principles. But whatever might have been Hume's professed objective, his actual procedure, particularly in this case, implies clearly a causal determination between the impressions and the ideas, as is indicated by such terms as 'produces,' 'gives rise to,' etc

It will be interesting, therefore, to analyse Śaṅkara's attack on the theory of a serial flow of impressions and ideas, as a preliminary to his criticism of the theory of the self as a series. And the most fundamental part of his criticism of the doctrine which assumes the reality of perpetual change or mere passing elements without a permanent basis consists in exposing the incompatibility of such a doctrine of purely evanescent events with the principles of causal determination that is supposed to exist between them. The advocates of perpetual change, he points out, admit that when the event that exists in the second moment makes its appearance what existed at the first moment has ceased to exist; but on this admission it is impossible to establish between the two events the relation of cause and effect.<sup>29</sup> Apart from the

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<sup>29</sup> *Na ca evam abhyupagacchātī pūrvottarayoh kṣanayor-hetuphalabhāvaḥ śakyate sampādayitum*—S B. II, 2. 20.

We need not show in detail how Śaṅkara analyses the meaning of a cause and drives the Buddhists to the self-contradictory position that a momentary existence must endure for

absurdity of predicating appearance as well as disappearance of an entity that is supposed to be perpetually changing, or momentary, the denial of a permanent cause leads inevitably to the position that entity springs from non-entity (*abhāvāt bhāvotpattih*)

And the most damaging implication of such a position is that anything may come out of anything because non-entity is everywhere the same, and in that case even a sprout may originate from the horn of a hare <sup>30</sup>

Śaṅkara, therefore, insists on the contrary position that "only things of permanent nature which are always recognised as what they are, such as gold, etc., can be the causes of effects like golden ornaments" <sup>31</sup>

It would certainly be infinitely interesting to remember at this place that these remarks of Śaṅkara on the incompatibility of the doctrine of momentary existence with causal determination embody essentially Green's criticism of Hume's attempt to combine the theory of flux with causal connection. Unless the passing feelings "were taken to represent a thing, conceived as permanently existing under certain

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more than one moment in order that it may be said to produce the succeeding event. Origination and cessation, he argues, can be predicated of an event only in so far as it endures for a few moments, and this implies that the event or the thing is not constantly changing but is permanent at least for the three moments of origination, endurance and disappearance

<sup>30</sup> *S. B. II, 2, 26*

<sup>31</sup> *Loc. cit*

relations and attributes—in other words, unless it were *identified* by thought—it would be no definite object, not this *flame* or this *heat*, at all ” And without such permanent objects, “there could be no such comparison of the relations in which two objects are now presented with those in which they have always been presented, as that which according to Hume determines us to regard them as cause and effect It is only on supposition that a certain sensation of sight is not merely like a multitude of others, but represents the same object as that which I have previously known as flame, that I infer the sequence of heat and, when it does follow, regard it as an effect ”<sup>32</sup>

Thus, according to Śaṅkara as well as Green, causal connection can exist only between things that are recognisable at different times, and not between the perishing existences, such as the ideas and impressions are supposed to be by Hume and his Indian predecessors, the Buddhists This leads to the connected problem of identity. And here, again, Hume’s explanation of identity is but a wonderful reproduction of the Buddhist’s account of it Recognition, according to the Buddhists, can be accounted for by

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<sup>32</sup> *Works*, I, p. 256.

The latter part of Green’s remarks is almost a literal translation of Sankara’s observation *Sthirasvabhāvānām eva suvarṇādīnām pratyabhijñāyamānānām rucakādi-kāryakāraṇa-bhāvadārśanāt*—*S B*, loc. cit.

similarity<sup>33</sup> Though, in fact, there is nothing permanent, yet two resembling nails or hairs are mistaken for the same identical nail or hair on account of their similarity. The flames of the fire, to take another oft-quoted example, are constantly changing, yet, the similarity of the flames at successive moments of time leads to the mistaken notion of one identical flame. How far this explanation of apparent identity is an anticipation of Hume's famous discussion on the subject does not require much comment. "Nothing is more apt to make us mistake one idea for another," to quote one of his characteristic sentences, "than any relation between them, which associates them together in the imagination, and makes it pass with facility from one to the other. Of all relations, that of resemblance is in this respect the most efficacious, and that because it not only causes an association of ideas, but also of dispositions, and makes us conceive the one idea of an act or operation of the mind, similar to that by which we conceive the other."<sup>34</sup> For Hume, identity is a fiction of imagination, and "resemblance is the cause of the confusion and mistake" and this resemblance "makes us substitute the notion of identity, instead of that of related objects."

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<sup>33</sup> *Sādrśyāt etat sanpātsyate*—*S. B.* II. 2. 25. *Sādrśyāt pratyabhijñānam, krttotthita-keśanakhādīsu va*—*Com. on the Brh. Up.* IV. 3. 7.

<sup>34</sup> *Treatise* I. IV. III.

Thus, according to the Buddhists as well as Hume, the recognition of an identical object is due to the resemblance existing between different ideas or impressions. Śaṅkara's objection to such an explanation is that it hardly accounts for the distinction we make in ordinary life between the judgments of identity and those of similarity. In recognising a thing as an identical object, we do not think that the present object is similar to a former object only <sup>35</sup>. This distinction between identity and similarity, Śaṅkara remarks, goes against the doctrine that recognition is due to similarity (*sādrśyāt pratyabhijñānam*), the example of nail and hair is not of much avail either, because the objects, such as the nails and hairs, are not momentary, and because here there is a unity in the species <sup>36</sup>. That is, the Buddhists have illustrated their doctrine, not from perishing existences, but from permanent things, and what is true of the latter cannot be extended to the former. And moreover, an object is recognised as being one of a species, there is a generic unity here, whereas in the case of a judgment of similarity we do not recognise

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<sup>35</sup> *Na ca ayam sādṛśyāt sanvyavahārah, yuktah, tadbhāvāvagamāt tatsadrśabhāvāvagamāt ca—S B. II. 2. 25*

<sup>36</sup> *Ksanikatvasyāsiddhatvāt jātyekatrāt ca—Com on the Bṛh Up. loc. cit.*

the individual identity of the things that are apprehended as similar.<sup>37</sup>

It is true, Śaṅkara admits, that in the case of external things, we may be sometimes in doubt whether the object before us is identical with, or only similar to, what was perceived before, but the absurdity of deriving identity from similarity becomes obvious in the case of the self that judges. Here there is not even the doubt whether the self is identical or similar.<sup>38</sup> And this clearly disproves the Buddhistic doctrine. A judgment of similarity, he continues, "is based on two things," and consequently it implies "a subject who is able to grasp the two similar things," hence those who advocate the doctrine of universal flux and yet assert that recognition is founded on similarity, talk nonsense only. If, on the other hand, it be admitted that "there is one mind apprehending the similarity of two successive momentary existences, he would thereby admit that one entity endures for two moments and thus contradict his doctrine of universal momentariness." Thus, the theory that recognition is based upon similarity cannot be made consistent

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<sup>37</sup> Compare Green's remark that Hume had practically assumed the possibility of identity when he admitted that we recognise each flame as 'one species of object,' and it is clear that the object recognised is by no means the feeling as a perishing existence. *Ibid.* p. 264.

<sup>38</sup> S. B. II. 2, 25.

with the theory of pure becoming; and the main reason, for Śaṅkara, is that the judgment of similarity, such as 'this is similar to that,' cannot be possible "in the absence of one subject who would grasp the two resembling things"<sup>39</sup> How far, here, again, Śaṅkara anticipates Green's contention against Hume may be seen from the latter's remark that though the impressions may occur in a perpetual flux of succession, "yet, just so far as they are qualified by likeness or unlikeness to each other, they must be taken out of that succession by something which is not itself in it, but is individually present to every moment of it"<sup>40</sup> So the consciousness of resemblance, according to Green, implies "a reference to that which is not itself any single impression, but is permanent throughout the impressions"

Śaṅkara, therefore, would certainly agree with Green and remark with the latter that the identity of objects must be "an unavoidable crux" for any theory that substitutes a pure succession of elements for the permanent principles of the world of experience. The identity of the self, especially, is regarded by Śaṅkara and Green as a fundamental presupposition of all experience including the knowledge of succession. It is one of their chief missions

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<sup>39</sup> *Śaḍṛṣayordvayorvastunorgrahīturekasya abhāvāt—loc. cit*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid* p. 176

to emphasise, against the supporters of pure becoming, the function of an identical synthetic principle that alone explains perception as well as our knowledge of succession. Even perception, as we have seen above,<sup>41</sup> implies a conscious synthetic principle that was wrongly identified by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thinkers with an unconscious soul-substance. And in Buddhism, we are confronted with the opposite error of pure substance-less succession that cannot account for even that element of aggregation (*saṅghāta*) that is yet presupposed by the Buddhist thinkers. Śaṅkara, therefore, rightly devotes a considerable space to the conditions of an aggregate being there. On the Buddhist principle, he urges, it is inexplicable, how the aggregate of the elements or of the five *skandhas* may be possible, inasmuch as the Buddhists do not admit any permanent conscious principle.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Green urges, over against Hume's description of the self as a bundle or collection of impressions that are in a perpetual flux, that the very term 'collection of ideas' is an absurdity, for, how can a perpetual flux be collected?

The point, however, at which the doctrine of universal becoming appears to break down completely is the difficulty of reconciling it with the possibility of

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<sup>41</sup> *Supra*, p. 163.

<sup>42</sup> *Supra*, p. 169.



memory; and memory has, therefore, provided the real bone of contention to the Indian as well as the Western thinkers of the opposite school. The absurdity of the doctrine of universal becoming, Śaṅkara thinks, is clearly exposed when it is extended to the perceiving self, because memory presupposes an identical person enduring throughout from the time of perception to the moment of remembrance. "What one man has experienced is not remembered by another man" And even the nihilist has to admit that "there is one thinking subject only to which the original perception as well as the remembrance belongs," and this fact, therefore, is as sure as that "fire is hot and gives light"

Hume, as is well known, did not face the difficulty squarely and contented himself with assuming that the 'perceptions' were unified in imagination. It is immaterial whether that in which the 'perceptions' are unified be called a self or imagination, in either case, the problem of reconciling the doctrine of universal flux with the possibility of the 'perceptions' being unified is not solved. If, on the other hand, it is assumed that they are unified in imagination, then this imagination itself becomes a permanent self which Hume could not discover among the passing mental states. This shortcoming in Hume's analysis of experience is removed by his followers, particularly by William James. In fact, W. James may very aptly

be called a genuine descendant of the Buddhists, and his theory of self combines in an admirably accurate manner all that is characteristic of the Buddhist theory. His conception of the self as a stream of consciousness, his insistence that the passing thoughts are themselves the thinkers, his doctrine that memory does not require for its explanation the hypothesis of a permanent self, his belief that identity can be well explained by the similarity existing between one phenomenon and another,—these are some of the well-known contentions that would easily be considered as genuinely Buddhistic. It would, therefore, be interesting to refer at this place to some of the outstanding features of his account of the self.

The fact of personal identity is discussed by W. James in his monumental work,<sup>43</sup> in a way that may be taken to be the last word on the subject from the standpoint of an empirical philosophy. He, therefore, rightly acknowledges his debt to Hume and Herbart in so far as they “describe the self as an aggregate of which each part, as to its *being*, is a separate fact.” His mission then is not to question what they had discovered in this respect but to develop their doctrine further with reference to “certain more subtle aspects” of the subjects that were neglected by his predecessors. The consciousness of personal sameness, he thinks,

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<sup>43</sup> *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. I, Ch. X

cannot be denied, as a subjective phenomenon, it is essential to all thinking. But this *feeling* of sameness, it is contended, does not prove that personal identity exists as a fact, as, for instance, when it is said that I am the same self that I was yesterday. Thought is constantly changing, it is a stream of subjective consciousness, yet, there is "resemblance among the parts of a continuum of feelings (especially bodily feelings) experienced along with things widely different in all other regards." This resemblance "constitutes the real and the verifiable 'personal identity' which we feel." It is true that the thoughts do not fly about loose, but are owned. But this too does not need the hypothesis of an identical self or the soul of metaphysics. Because it can be well explained by the present Thought which, though different from the past Thoughts, has merely inherited their 'title' and thus stood as their legal representative now. "We can imagine a long succession of herdsmen coming rapidly into possession of the same cattle by transmission of an original title by bequest." In a similar way, "Each pulse of cognitive consciousness, each Thought, dies away and is replaced by another. The other, among the things it knows, knows its own predecessor, and finding it 'warm' greets . . . it, saying: 'Thou art mine, and part of the same self with me.' Each later Thought, knowing and including thus the Thought which went before, is the final

receptacle of all that they contain and own. Each Thought is thus born an owner, and dies owned, transmitting whatever it realised as its Self to its own later proprietor."<sup>44</sup> James then refers to Kant's analogy of the elastic balls and concludes "Who owns the last self owns the self before the last; for what possesses the possessor possesses the possessed."

There is, therefore, no need, according to such a doctrine, of a permanent soul for explaining either the fact of ownership or the feeling of personal identity. "The sense of personal identity, then, is exactly like any one of our other perceptions of sameness among phenomena. It is a conclusion grounded either on the resemblance in a fundamental respect, or on the continuity before the mind, of the phenomena compared."

How far W. James's analysis of personal identity and his explanation of appropriation by a later Thought of the contents of the former Thoughts are but an admirable summary of the Buddhistic position may be seen from Vasubandhu's discussion on the nature of the self and on the fact of recognition. In opposition to the doctrine of the *pudgala* accepted by the Vātsīputrīyas, Vasubandhu seeks to reconcile the facts of memory and recognition with the position which denies a permanent principle over and above

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<sup>44</sup> *Loc cit.* p. 339.

the series of passing events or the stream of thought. In the absence of a permanent principle, it is urged by the Vātsīputriyas, "things experienced by Devadatta's consciousness would be remembered by the consciousness of Yajñadatta"<sup>45</sup> This objection, it may be noted here, arises inevitably from the refusal to accept any permanent principle over and above the flux of what are generally described as the states of consciousness. There is no agent, it is contended by Vasubandhu, called the soul, besides "an unbroken continuity of momentary forces". Even consciousness is a conventional name for a chain of conscious moments, much as the light of a lamp is a common metaphorical designation for an uninterrupted production of a series of flashing flames<sup>46</sup> All elements which partake in the process of life are characterised by a constant change, they constitute a stream in which the next moment is necessarily different from the preceding one. In the continuous stream of ideas, there is a fixed order of succession. There is a certain affinity between ideas "in virtue of which there are ideas somehow similar to others and having the power of evoking them". As, for instance, when the idea

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<sup>45</sup> These quotations are taken from Dr Th. Stcherbatsky's translation, under the title 'The Soul Theory of the Buddhists,' of the appendix to the 8th chapter of Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakosa*

<sup>46</sup> p. 938.

of a woman is associated with the idea of an impure body or the idea of her husband, son, etc., and if, later on, in the changing stream of thought, the same idea of a woman reappears, it has the power of evoking those ideas of impure body, or of a husband, son, etc., because they are associated with it, but it has not the power of evoking other ideas. The conclusion, we arrive at, is, therefore, this. Just as milk and water are conventional names (for a set of independent elements) for some colour, smell, taste, and touch, taken together, so is the designation 'individual' but a common name for the different elements, which it is composed of.

The fact of memory and recognition, according to Vasubandhu, does not militate against such a theory of serial self, nor does the latter, when properly understood, lead to the absurd position that what one has experienced should be remembered by another. This would be possible only if there had not been a causal relation between the different members of a series. The experiences of Devadatta are not remembered by Yajñadatta, because "they are not mutually related as cause and effect, as is the case between moments belonging to the same stream of thought." A man who perceived an object can remember it, but what it means is this that "a consciousness which perceived an object formerly is gradually producing a consciousness which remembers it now." So, for example, when we say

“Caitra remembers,” what it really means is that in the current of phenomena which is designated by the name Caitra a recollection appears <sup>47</sup> It is no more. Similarly, when we say “the memory of Caitra,” the proprietor is simply the cause and the property will simply be its effect.

Such a position, supported and described by the Buddhists as well as the modern thinkers, such as W. James, has at least the merit of presenting the doctrine of self, as best as the facts would allow, in conformity with the doctrine of universal becoming. The self, according to it, is not something like an abiding soul-substance underlying the changing states of consciousness, it is rather a stream or series of elements that may either be called ‘thoughts’ after W. James or ‘*viññānas*’ after the Buddhist idealists. The unity of personality which is an undoubted fact is explained here, not by reference to a hypothetical entity lying beyond the stream, but by a sort of ‘affinity’ or causal influence which a previous member of the series exercises upon a succeeding member, so that a given ‘thought’ can belong to one stream as distinct from another. It is this causal affinity that explains the fact that each of us has a particular mental stream that may run parallel to other mental streams but can never be identical with the latter. In

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<sup>47</sup> p. 853.

other words, the unity of personality is merely the unity of a series, and not that of a soul-substance. Even the facts of memory and recognition are not supposed to need the hypothesis of an identical self provided we understand the trick by which the contents of one 'thought' are transmitted to another. This transmission takes place either because the 'thoughts' that belong to one stream have a 'warmth and intimacy' for each member of that series, or because, as the Buddhists put it, each idea gives rise to another through a sort of affinity that is sometimes likened to the transmission of the red colour from one cotton canvas to another or the transference of the flavour from one flower to another. Hence, though I am changing incessantly, from moment to moment, from childhood to old age, and from one life to another, yet, the series of my mental states remains unbroken and undiverted, and my present 'thought' remembers only what was perceived by a member of the same series to which it itself belongs.

It is easy to see that such an explanation of memory, in spite of the improvements which W. James professes to have made upon Hume's account, is subject to the same critical observations which Śaṅkara has brought to bear upon the Buddhistic theory of pure becoming. So far as identity is said to be grounded on similarity, Śaṅkara, as we have seen above, would condemn such an assertion as a mere



nonsense, because there can be no consciousness of similarity in the absence of an unchanging subject that grasps the two similar things. So even if it be granted that our knowledge of the similarity existing between two things does not presuppose any judgment of identity in regard to any of those things, such a knowledge does at least imply the identity of the subject that is aware of the similarity. The only reply that might be made by James, if he had known the Indian controversy, would be that in the judgment of similarity, the judging 'thought' is entirely different from (*pratyayāntaram eva*) all other 'thoughts' and that the judgment is not conditioned by the apprehension or awareness of two different things (*na pūrvot-tarakṣaṇādvayagrahaṇanimittam*). But even then the difficulty does not disappear, because if there had not been two things that are compared and are known to be similar, we should, as Śaṅkara rightly remarks, speak of 'similarity' only, and not of 'this' similar to 'that.' In other words, the awareness of similarity is not as simple as the awareness, say, of a colour or sound. Even if it be conceded that when I perceive the red colour what really happens is that my present 'thought' grasps a particular sensation which is com-present with it, such an analysis would be clearly inadequate in the case of my knowledge of similarity, inasmuch as similarity implies two things, a 'this' and a 'that' both of which must be grasped in one

act of attention. In accepting the Humian explanation of identity, James does not seem to have been disturbed in the least by the damaging observations made by the critics of Hume, such as Green, on the attempt to derive identity from resemblance. And what appears to be more strange is the welcome that has been accorded to Hume's explanation of identity by thinkers who are expected to be better informed and more careful than James. Mr. B. Russell, for instance, describes the self as the causal nexus among a series of events, and has then naturally to confront the problem of identity and that of recognition. Nothing disturbed by the previous history of the problem, he remarks that "when we recognise something, it was not in fact the very same thing, but only something similar, that we experienced on a former occasion. A person's face is always changing, and is not exactly the same on any two occasions. Common-sense treats it as one face with varying expressions; but the varying expressions actually exist, each at its proper time, while the one face is merely a logical construction."<sup>48</sup> Such a passage might easily be taken as an extract from the work of a Buddhist, and both James and Russell could infinitely strengthen their position, if they had known the wonderfully

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<sup>48</sup> *The Analysis of Mind*, p. 171.

subtle dialectics of the Buddhists in defence of an identical position.<sup>49</sup>

These attempts to reconcile recognition and memory with the doctrine of universal becoming may perhaps create more admiration than conviction. The difficulty is really concealed, and not solved, under the notion of transmission which is assumed by James as well as the Buddhists as a fact. The truth is that even transmission could not be possible in a world of perpetual change, much less could the contents of one idea be transmitted to another without an unchanging background. The analogy of the balls or of the canvas would not even carry any sense to us if we had not assumed a permanent unchanging environment in which the balls are imagined to move. If we add to this the argument that even the consciousness of a series would be impossible if consciousness itself had been a member of the series,—an argument which is rightly emphasised by Śaṅkara and Kant,—the irreconcilability of recognition and memory with the concept of a changing self would be easily realised

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<sup>49</sup> "Identity, eternality, etc.," it is urged, for instance, by Śāntaraksita, "are purely imaginary, not real" *Ekadvaitatādisca kalpito na tu tātṭvikah—Tattva-Saṅgrahaḥ*, G.O.S., p. 262. And Kamalaśīla clears up this position by adding that if a Buddhist mentions the term identity, he does it only in view of common misconceptions (*bhrānti-pratipatti-nurodhena*).

This, however, does not mean a total denial of the applicability of the concept of evolution to the human mind. Even an elementary fact of perception, as we have seen above, implies change in the mind. Similarly, the growth of mind from one stage to another may be admitted. But it will be a fatal confusion to infer from the evolution or growth of mind that there is change in consciousness as well. Changes in consciousness, it has been one of Green's repeated contentions, cannot account for the consciousness of change. We might introduce a little modification into Green's expression and insist that changes in mind cannot explain the consciousness of mental changes. In other words, the term 'mind' is highly ambiguous, it may either refer to the changing principle which Green calls sensibility, or, again, it may mean the unchanging principle which is called consciousness. No one of them, he rightly urges, can be reduced to the other. In that case, we must give up the slovenly fashion of using the same term for these irreducible principles indifferently. This ambiguity has been responsible for a large number of confusions in psychology as well as in epistemology, and we shall have to consider them in due course. What has to be remembered in the present context is that nothing that changes is consciousness, yet mind grows, and it is in a satisfactory reconciliation of these two aspects that the strength of a philosophical position consists.

From the similarities we have emphasised between James's explanation of memory and that of Vasubandhu, it may be seen that the improvements, which the former claims to have made upon Hume, had in fact been made long before by the Buddhists. The trick of transmission and the theory of functional identity persisting through substantial diversity have been a more or less permanent feature of Buddhism, because they alone can offer a plausible explanation of recognition and memory in conformity with the theory of universal flux, and the Buddhists were too acute not to utilize them fully. The whole position is put in a very brief and clear way by Śāntarakṣita when he remarks that "even things that are diverse by reason of the diversity of their powers become the basis of an effect conceived as *one*"<sup>50</sup> Consequently, it is a mistake to infer an identical percipient agent from the fact of recollection; it is a false assumption (*mithyā-ikalpa*)

The theory of functional identity, it is evident, is based entirely upon analogies derived from the world of objects, as is apparent from the instances used by Śāntarakṣita, Kant or James. It is true that in certain matters, analogies are both useful and inevitable even in philosophical thinking. But, then, they must be able to explain the important point in a

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<sup>50</sup> *Tattva-Saṅgrahaḥ*, G. O. S., p. 85.

discussion without assuming beforehand what needs explanation. The very first thing that must be borne in mind in discussing memory or recollection is that all objects have a meaning only in so far as they are presented to consciousness, and that consciousness cannot be cut up into separate bits. So much we learn even from our psychologists. "The object of thought," it is said by Prof G. F. Stout, "is whatever the mind means or intends to refer to To perceive or think at all is to perceive or think of something, and this something, just because it is perceived or thought of, is an object presented to consciousness."<sup>61</sup> But, it is to be remembered at the same time that "the unity of consciousness is radically different in its nature from any unity which can belong to a material thing. Every material thing is extended in space and therefore consists of parts spatially external to each other and spatially separable from each other It is divisible into component portions, each of which exists independently as a material thing or parcel of matter in the same way as the whole which is constituted by their union The cup, for instance, which I hold in my hand is apprehended by me as one thing, but the separate subsistence of its parts as distinct bodies is forcibly brought home to me, if it falls on the floor and is broken in fragments On the contrary, the unity

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<sup>61</sup> *Manual of Psychology, Fourth Edition*, p. 99.

and distinctness of an individual consciousness is not thus composed of parts, each possessing independently a separable unity and distinctness of the same kind. It cannot be broken into fragmentary thoughts, feelings, and volitions, or fragments of thought, feeling and volition, each persisting like the pieces of the cup, when I have ceased to think, feel and will. A material thing is composed of material things; but a conscious self is not composed of conscious selves''<sup>52</sup>

We have quoted here rather extensively from a competent modern psychologist in view of the confusions into which many an able thinker has fallen in giving a true description of consciousness. The whole description may be summarised in the language of Śaṅkara who says that " 'The known' means whatever is the object of special knowledge, and as all such objects can be known somewhere, to some extent and by someone and so forth, the whole world is meant by the term 'the known' "''<sup>53</sup> But the self for which all objects have a meaning "is not in itself divided, it only appears divided owing to its limiting adjuncts, such as the mind and so on, just as the ether appears divided by its connexion with jars and the like."''<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid* , p. 13.

<sup>53</sup> *Com on the Kenopanisad* Part I 3

<sup>54</sup> *S B. II. 3. 17.*

We may now easily detect the fallacy in the theory of functional identity. A series of 'ideas' has no meaning apart from the assumption of a plurality of ideas forming the series, a serial unity, that is, implies a plurality of units each of which occupies a distinct moment of time. In this sense they are fragmentary and at least mentally separable from each other, and so far the unity of the series is like the unity of the material things. But this must be different from the unity of consciousness or the self which apprehends them as forming a series. If the self also had changed corresponding to the change in the ideas, there would not be any consciousness of the series as a unity. The serial unity, therefore, is entirely different from, and points to, the conscious principle *within* which there is no plurality. And, consequently, all analogies taken from the world of objects where plurality and complexity are undeniable facts must be inapplicable to the unity of consciousness.

In the theory of functional identity, we thus come once more upon the fallacy of confusing *vṛtti* with *bodha* which was found to vitiate the psychological analysis of perception. The modifications of sensibility, as Green puts it, are irreducible to the conscious principle and *vice versa*, though both are necessary for a perceptual act. The mental changes, in other words, are not changes *within* consciousness, and mental growth or the evolution of mind is not an



evolution of the conscious principle. To put it in the language of Kant himself, the empirical apperception is not the transcendental apperception, the former is a "flux of inner phenomena," and here "there can be no unchanging or permanent self." The latter, on the contrary, is "pure, original, unchangeable consciousness." Apart from the latter which is the "unity of consciousness which is prior to all data of perception," "no unity and connection of objects is possible." To put the whole thing once more in the words of Śaṅkara, the conscious principle is the pre-supposition (*grāhikā*) of the fragmentary and changing knowledge-events.

The only remark that must be added here is that evolution has no meaning if the different stages of the universe do not form a series each occupying a definite place in time. In "pure duration" there can be no evolution if there is within it no 'before' and no 'after'. It follows from this that we cannot even imagine how there could be a universal evolution if the man who seeks to know it had been himself a member of the evolving universe. Evolution is change, at the least, and change must be in time which implies succession, a 'before' and an 'after'. In imagining the past history of the world, we have necessarily to transfer ourselves backward, as in imagining the future of the world we must similarly transfer ourselves forward, as looking at the changing events. And

as imagination is founded on actual perception, whatever is true of the latter must be true of the former; the conditions of the perception of change must apply equally to the imagination of change. But the perception of change and succession implies, as we have seen, a conscious principle which is not itself in succession. When, therefore, we imagine the past or the future of the world, such an unchanging principle must be postulated to account for our knowledge of the evolving world. This, of course, does not mean that I was never born, or that I can never die. But the conclusion that seems to follow irresistibly from these considerations is that man, in so far as he knows history, cannot be entirely historical, the knowledge of a changing universe, in other words, cannot be possible for a being that is nothing more than a part of the changing universe. "Two ideas which occupy different moments of time and pass away as soon as they have become objects of consciousness," as put by Śaṅkara, "cannot apprehend or be apprehended by each other"<sup>55</sup> Even the perception of a series implies the reality of "a continuous principle equally connected with the past, the present, and the future, or an absolutely unchangeable self."<sup>56</sup> And the concept of universal evolution is but the perceived change applied on a cosmic scale

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<sup>55</sup> S B II, 2. 28.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 2. 31.

It has been, therefore, rightly remarked that "a living being that knows seems to belong to an order quite different in kind from that of one that merely lives without knowing"<sup>57</sup> The knowledge of change which we all possess shows at the same time that we are possessors of eternity. "The relations of events to each other as in time," as Green puts it almost borrowing his language from Śaṅkara, "implies their equal presence to a subject which is not in time."<sup>58</sup>

In fact the analysis of our knowledge of change which is offered by Kant and Green is essentially an illuminating commentary to Śaṅkara's theory of perception. The advaita position in respect of this problem is beautifully summarised by Sureśvara, one of Śaṅkara's immediate successors. The self, he says, is the non-successional seer (*akramadṛk*) of the passing modes of mind (*Dhī* or *Buddhi*), it is the latter which changes with the different acts of knowledge, and not the self which sees the past, the present and the future simultaneously. If the witnessing self had changed, there would arise no knowledge of the thousand changing modes of the mind. The self, therefore, for Sureśvara, is unchanging (*avikriya*), above the three temporal distinctions (*nīstrīkāla*), and eternal (*kūṭastha*).<sup>59</sup> Apart from Green's repeated

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<sup>57</sup> Haldane, *The Reign of Relativity*, p. 151.

<sup>58</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 59.

<sup>59</sup> *Naisharmyasiddhi* II, 69-77

warnings against the confusion of "feeling" with "consciousness," the following passage admirably brings out the functions of sensibility and the conscious subject respectively in our knowledge of time:—"Sensibility is the condition of existence in time, of there being events related to each other as past, present, and future. Ask yourself what meaning the terms 'now' and 'then' have except as derived from a relation between a perpetually vanishing consciousness and one that is permanent, and you find they have none. When we say that there was time or there were events in time before man began to exist, we mean that there were events, of which each was thus related to another as 'now' and 'then'. But all these expressions about 'events' and 'happening' and 'taking place' imply or derive their meaning from a sensibility, of which the perpetually vanishing modes are held together by a subject equally present to, and distinguishing itself from, all of them."<sup>60</sup> We need not discuss here Green's theory of an eternal sensibility, but what will be very important for our further analysis of what we have called the foundational consciousness is the distinction, he insists on, between the two conditions of our knowledge of change.

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<sup>60</sup> *Works* II, p. 79,

## CHAPTER VII

### CONSCIOUSNESS AND SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

The discussions on the conditions of knowledge undertaken in the last two chapters should have cleared up some of the difficulties in the way of a correct theory of self. The self, we have seen, is of the nature of foundational knowledge or foundational consciousness, though it is generally mixed up with things other than itself, such as, mental modes or modifications of sensibility. In fact, this association of the real self with the not-self is so intimate and indissoluble that large portions of advaita literature are devoted to arguments designed to prove that the conscious principle is *not* any of the pseudo-selves with which it is generally confused. Even the modifications of mind,—that are called here '*antaḥkaraṇavṛtti*'s or '*buddhi-vṛtti*'s—are not the real self, on the contrary, they are as much objects for a subject as the physical things, even they are illumined by the light of the self. In other words, the self is the presupposition of all objects including the physical as well as the mental events and things. It is, to put it in the language of Kant, the transcendental condition of "Nature." The mistake of the substantialists as well as the actualists, to borrow James's language, is identical in

so far as both take the self to be something other than the foundational consciousness, and this mistake is nothing but a confusion of consciousness to which all objects and events are presented with what undergoes modifications and change. Even the 'ideas' of the Yogācāra school which form a series are nothing but fragmentary mental modifications that are mistaken to be momentary flashes of consciousness on account of the conscious principle lying beyond, and illumining, them.

As a substantial help to the understanding of the nature of foundational consciousness, we must now turn to certain unquestionable facts of our daily life that are not ordinarily emphasised in modern philosophy. The perplexities which have grown round the problem of personal identity,—a problem which even Bradley thinks to be one that can be best solved by not asking questions about it—are, we think, due to the same difficulty of avoiding the confusion of consciousness with mental modifications. Bradley is surely right in thinking that the question of personal identity "is sheer nonsense until we have got some clear idea as to what the self is to stand for."<sup>1</sup> He is further right in taking it as "evident that, for personal identity, some continuity is requisite." But he is equally wrong in thinking that continuity during sleep is doubtful and so it cannot be used to prove identity.

<sup>1</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 73.

Here, as we shall see presently, Bradley seems to draw as hasty a conclusion as was drawn by Kaṇāda and Rāmānuja.

The breaks in 'psychical continuity' which Bradley thinks to be irreconcilable with an identical self, as is too well known to require any elaborate proof, were a source of infinite trouble to Locke whose contradictions on this subject should have made the subsequent philosophers pause to think whether the generally accepted notion of self-consciousness were not ambiguous. According to Locke, it might well be the privilege of the Infinite Author that he never slumbers or sleeps, but so far as the finite minds were concerned he could never accept the Cartesian notion of a thinking substance which thinks always. Those at least "who do at any time sleep without dreaming," he thinks, "can never be convinced that their thoughts are sometimes for four hours busy without their knowing of it"<sup>2</sup> He is, therefore, quite sure that the soul in a sleeping man has neither pleasure nor pain any more than the bed or earth he lies on. Locke does not feel disturbed till he raises the question "whether, if the same substance, which thinks, be changed, it can be the same person, or, remaining the same, it can be different persons?"<sup>3</sup> It is this question which forces

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<sup>2</sup> *Essay*, Bk. II. 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, Bk. II, Ch. 27, Sec. 12.

him for the first time to give up his anti-Cartesian belief, and admit that 'consciousness makes the same person.' He then proceeds to acknowledge that "if the same Socrates waking and sleeping do not partake of the same consciousness, Socrates waking and sleeping is not the same person "

This admission and contradiction in Locke have not succeeded in directing the attention of the subsequent thinkers to a more careful study of the states of dream and dreamless sleep. Even James, one of the distinguished psychologists of our time, confesses that "we can give no rigorous answer to this question " <sup>4</sup> The problem of breach in consciousness, he says, can be easily solved *a priori*, if we had accepted the Cartesian theory of soul, but such a course is not open to one who has "no doctrine about the soul or its essence," and, consequently, he would rather "admit that the mind, as well as the body, may go to sleep " James is apparently unaware of the contradictions of Locke and so accepts Locke's defence of his position as spirited. It is, however, admitted that the facts of hysteria and hypnotism prove conclusively that "we must never take a person's testimony, however sincere, that he has felt nothing, as proof positive that no feeling has been there." <sup>5</sup> But this admission remains as a passing observation which does not affect seriously

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<sup>4</sup> *Principles of Psychology*, I, p. 200

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.



his views on the problem of self-consciousness. It is a pregnant admission, to borrow a well-known remark of Green on Locke's admission of an identical consciousness, but it brings nothing to the birth in James. He would cling to the theory of self as "a generic unity," rather than accept a "sort of metaphysical or absolute Unity in which all differences are overwhelmed."<sup>6</sup> His Peter and Paul wake up in the morning and recollect their respective past experiences, not because each is an identical consciousness, but because the past experiences of each come to him with a warmth and intimacy due to his body and the central adjustments which "*are the real nucleus of our personal identity*"<sup>7</sup>

His rejection of the metaphysical Unity would not be so easy if he had stopped to consider what was implied in the knowledge of "the body and the central adjustments." Even if it be supposed that the body is out there, it will not explain how it comes to be an *object of my knowledge*; how, in other words, the perishing 'thoughts' can be the vehicle of the knowledge of a body which persists as an identical object through different moments of time. If he had raised this problem of knowledge, as it was raised by Hume upon whose theory of self he sought to improve, he

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 335.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 341

would easily see that the "transcendentalist school" could not simply be dismissed as one "in which psychology at least has naught to learn"<sup>8</sup> Whatever may have been the linguistic ambiguity of that school, the clearest lesson it teaches is that the perception of the "body" presupposes an identical consciousness as the ultimate basis of recognition involved in all perceptions. Mere perishing pulses of thought cannot explain recollection and knowledge of identical things. James admits that "however complex the object may be, the thought of it is one undivided state of consciousness."<sup>9</sup> That which knows the "empirical aggregate of things," he says, "cannot itself be an aggregate."<sup>10</sup> But he never considers seriously how the perishing thoughts can explain the possibility of rising above the empirical aggregate and become an undivided unity.

Similarly, he does no justice whatsoever to Kant, Green, and Caird, when he reads into their theories the distinction between an *agent* and the *activity* which belongs to it. His criticism of the theory of soul-substance would be heartily endorsed by those whom he criticises, and a reputed scholar like James should have known that the transcendental self is not a transcendent spiritual substance, but an immanent

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 370

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 276.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 400.

principle which is ever present in all our thoughts and feelings, it is as immanent as the 'thoughts' by which he seeks to replace it. Apart from this transcendental self, the present passing 'Thought' could not be a "principle by which the Many is simultaneously known."<sup>11</sup> The "mystery of synthesis" cannot be explained either by a transcendent principle or by a passing 'Thought,' it can be explained only by an identical principle which, though immanent, yet does not pass away with the passing pulses of thought. It must be, in other words, non-successional (*akramadrk*), as Sureśvara puts it, and yet undeniably present in all our fragmentary knowledge and experience.

All this has been explained with sufficient force and clearness. We have seen, for instance, that the foundational consciousness is the presupposition of all distinctions and differences we ordinarily make between the knowing agent and the property of knowledge. Consciousness is not an attribute *of* the self, it is not something that is possessed *by* the self in the same way in which the cow is possessed by Caitra. It *is* the self. In fact, James deliberately shuts his eyes and then complains that he cannot see. He starts on his criticism of the transcendental theory with the explicit statement that he need do "no more than decide what

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid* , p. 364.

to think of the transcendental Ego *if it be* an agent."<sup>12</sup> And it is no wonder that he finds in Kant's transcendentalism nothing more than Substantialism grown shame-faced. It is true that Kant has made himself partly liable to this charge by his unguarded language. But his theory of self would be better understood if the critics had given more attention to his explanation of the dialectic illusion involved in rational psychology. Kant has been seriously misunderstood, and it will take us long afield to attempt a full exposition of his theory of self and his doctrine of categories. So far as the latter is concerned, we have partly done it elsewhere.<sup>13</sup> So far as his theory of self is concerned, none will be in a position to appreciate him who ignores his remark that the "identity of the subject in all the determinations of which I can be conscious is not the same thing as a perception in which the self is presented as an object which can be recognized as self-identical."<sup>14</sup> The fallacy of rational psychology consists in this that "The unity of consciousness, which is the supreme condition of the categories, is simply confused with a perception of the subject as object, and hence we suppose that we may apply to the subject the

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 365.

<sup>13</sup> *Viz*, *Self, Thought and Reality*, Chapters VI—IX, and Kant's *Analysis of Scientific Method* an article in *Review of Philosophy and Religion*, Vol. VI, No. 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Watson's Selections*, p. 150

category of substance''<sup>15</sup> This is a serious mistake. "The subject no doubt thinks the categories, but that is no reason for saying that it can have a conception of itself as an object of the categories. It cannot think the categories without presupposing its own self-consciousness, and therefore self-consciousness cannot be brought under the categories."

The difficulty in putting aright the status of the self in the language of ordinary speech and thought arises from the fact that "the specific nature of our understanding consists in thinking everything discursively, that is, representing it by concepts, and so by mere predicates, to which therefore the absolute subject must always be wanting"<sup>16</sup> But we must always remember that self-consciousness "is itself the ground of the possibility of the Categories," and, therefore, self-consciousness in general is the representation of that which is the condition of all unity, and yet itself unconditioned"<sup>17</sup>

Kant's theory of self is essentially the corner-stone of the doctrine of Green who remarks that "the really prolific element" in Kant's theory of knowledge is the view of the noumenon "which he calls the ego, as the source of the categories"<sup>18</sup> He accepts the view that

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 154

<sup>16</sup> Kant's *Prolegomena*, by Mahaffy and Bernard, p. 97.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 229

<sup>18</sup> *Works* III, p. 127.

“the existence of a knowable nature implies that of a principle of union which is not itself part of the knowable nature, not one or any number of the relations which constitute it, an unconditioned, in relation to which alone the mutual conditioning of phenomena is possible, a consciousness of laws of nature, or rather a principle of consciousness which, in relation to sensibility, yields laws of nature, which is not itself subject to those laws of nature”<sup>19</sup> This consciousness “is one which, on however limited a scale, we ourselves exercise in the acquisition of experience, and exercise only by means of such a consciousness.”<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, Caird, in spite of his quarrels with Kant, has no doubt in his mind that self-consciousness is an undeniable fact, it is “our very highest type of knowledge,” and to reject it is “as if one should say that it is impossible to see the sun because we cannot throw the rays of a candle upon it. But as it is the light which reveals both itself and the darkness, so it is self-consciousness through which we know both itself and all other objects”<sup>21</sup>

In view of these unambiguous statements of Kant, Green and Caird, it would be surely unwarranted in the highest degree to condemn the transcendental Ego as “simply *nothing*. as ineffectual and windy an

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<sup>19</sup> *Works* II, p 90

<sup>20</sup> *Prolegomena*, p 59.

<sup>21</sup> *Hegel*, p 147.

abortion as Philosophy can show”<sup>22</sup> We must, in order to do justice to the transcendental theory, give up definitely the habit of thinking of the conscious principle under the categories of substance and attribute, and in fact under any category whatsoever. The transcendental theory, sketched above, is clearly the theory of Śankara which we have partly explained in connection with the doctrine of foundational consciousness, and Haldane’s theory of foundational knowledge. The self, he says in another context, is not an *agent* of the *activity* of knowledge, on the contrary, it is essentially knowledge, knowledge, that is, is its very essence<sup>23</sup> “Just as when it is asserted that ‘that which shines in front is the Sun, that which shines to the south, to the west, to the north, and upwards, is the Sun,’ what is really meant is that *brightness* is the nature of the Sun,” similarly, when it is said that “the self is an *agent of cognition*,” what is really meant is that “cognition is the very essence” of the self and not its “activity”;<sup>24</sup> Self-consciousness,

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<sup>22</sup> James, *Loc. cit.*, p. 365

<sup>23</sup> *Vedanam asya svarūpam ityaraṅgamya*—*Com. on the Chāndogya Uṇ. VIII. 12. 5.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ātmanah sattāmātra eva jñānakartrtvam na tu vyāpṛtatayā*—*loc. cit.* This whole passage, when literally translated, would run as follows—The self’s agency of knowledge is its mere existence, and not its activity, just as the Sun’s agency of revelation is its mere existence, and not a function.

therefore, is not the consciousness of an *agent* possessing the activity of knowledge in the same way in which Caitra possesses the cow <sup>25</sup>

Kant's thesis that self-consciousness cannot be brought under the categories has, we believe, an important significance for a right understanding of the nature of self. His real meaning, as it may now be easier to understand, is that the self, though undeniably real,—because it is always present as the transcendental ground of all our experience—cannot, yet, be brought under the conditions of what he calls the “understanding,” the specific nature of which is this that it thinks everything discursively, “representing it by concepts, and so by mere predicates.” This discursive understanding is sometimes called by Śāṅkara *Buddhi*, which is defined as that in which are hidden the three categories of knowledge, the knowable, and the knower <sup>26</sup>. Though it is necessary to represent the self as the knower or the subject of knowledge, yet it will be a serious blunder to think that knowledge is possessed by the knower or the subject, because, in reality, “the knower has no distinct

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<sup>25</sup> Compare *Ajñānabodhinī* 34, where it is said that when it is asserted that the knowledge is yours, what is really meant is that knowledge is yourself—much as the phrase ‘the head of Rāhu’ means that the head is the Rāhu itself.

<sup>26</sup> *Nigūḍhā avyām jñāna-jñeya-jñātr-padārtha itī guhā Buddhih*—Com on the *Tait Uṇ*, Ch. I of the *Brahma-sūtra*.



existence apart from knowledge ''<sup>27</sup> This knowledge which is the essence of the self is not of the nature of an *act*, yet, in conformity with the conditions of the discursive intellect, which describes everything by means of its properties (*ṛātyādhārma*), we describe it as the knowledge *of* the subject. As so described, the description, if taken literally, can only indicate indirectly, and not represent directly, the self <sup>28</sup> The discursive intellect can represent only that which conforms to the categories of unity, cause, space, time, etc., that is, it can represent what is determined by some kind of relation. And the result is that even when the self which is the transcendental condition of all objects is represented by the discursive intellect, it is necessarily described as 'something' that possesses the attribute of consciousness. Similarly, when the self is said to be a synthetic principle, it is represented as something like an agent exercising its combining activity and thus generating experience out of the multiplicity of sense-data. But such a representation, though necessary for discursive thinking, is not a true representation of the self, it is nothing more than a false representation arising out of the necessity of discursive thinking through the forms of language.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ātmanah svarūpam jñaptirna tato vyatiricyate—loc. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> *Buddhidharmavisaṃyaya jñānaśabdena tat lakṣyate na tu ucyate—loc. cit.*

Such discursive representations, in other words, are mere semblances or figurative images (*avabhāsa*) that are necessary for the purposes of descriptions only. They point indirectly to the self within which there is no distinction.

It may be noted even here, in order to avoid misunderstanding, that discursive thinking is not altogether condemned by Śaṅkara, as is done by the mystics or the agnostics. The self is beyond speech and thought, *not* because it is the denizen of a world altogether inaccessible to human faculties, but because it is presupposed by all distinctions including the distinction of subject from object or of agent from activity. Our knowledge must be based upon distinctions,<sup>29</sup> whatever is known must be known through the intellect (*buddhi-dvāreṇa* or *antahkaraṇa-dvāreṇa*). But in that case we must not be misled by the grammatical forms when the self is represented through the intellect, this is all that is meant by the warning against the discursive representation of the self.<sup>30</sup> The self can be described only in so far as it is represented in conformity with the forms of the intellect, and as so represented, we must distinguish

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<sup>29</sup> *Vīśeṣaṇbandho hi upalabdhihetuh—Ibid*, Ch. VI.

<sup>30</sup> In the language of the advaita literature, this means the connection of the self with the cavity of the intellect or *antahkaraṇa-gaḥātma-sambandhaḥ*, through which the self must be known.

between the knower and the known. That is, though the self is of the nature of foundational knowledge, and, as such, devoid of the distinction between subject and object, yet it has to be described as the subject for which exists the object.<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, the bulk of the advaita literature is exclusively devoted to the discovery of the foundational consciousness transcending what is given through the discursive intellect. And the study of the dream-experience and of dream-less sleep is one of those devices that are rightly considered as an effective help for understanding its reality and nature. In deep dreamless sleep, for instance, there is evidently a break in the psychical current, yet the sense of identity is not broken, nor is the memory of Peter confused with that of Paul, when they wake up in the morning. It would certainly be a mere sophistry to account for the feeling of identity without postulating an identical principle which persists through the different stages of waking consciousness, dream, and dreamless slumber. These three states, says Śaṅkara, come in succession, yet everyone recognises himself as 'I am he'.<sup>32</sup> "I think" accompanies not only the different

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<sup>31</sup> Such a subject is sometimes called *ajñānamaya* or the self which has assumed the character of, and got mingled with, *buddhi* or *antahkārana*. See, for instance, Śaṅkara's *Commentary on the Brh Up.* II, 1, 16.

<sup>32</sup> *Com. on Gaudapāda-Kārikā* 1;

items of perception as Kant rightly said, it persists through the different states undisturbed by the apparent break of psychical current in sleep. Identity, as distinct from mere continuity, in some form or other must be admitted, therefore, in order to account for this persistent recognition. Let it be granted that a time-less self is "a psychological monster," as Bradley puts it, but some plausible explanation must still be given of the undeniable facts of our life. Mere generic unity of the ever-perishing 'thoughts' does not explain it, and even a generic unity would be impossible without a persistent identical principle that does not itself change. James thinks that such an identical principle is a mere superfluity, because the thoughts may perish yet their ownership is never-lapsing, and the trick of transmission and appropriation is perfectly compatible with their changing nature. But this does not explain how Paul's feeling of identity remains undisturbed in spite of the fact that the 'thoughts' were entirely suspended for such a long interval. Even if it be conceded that the present thought inherits the contents of the dying thought, yet, sleep is a clear exception to the rule that 'what possesses the possessor possesses the possessed.'

Similarly, it does not seem to be an adequate explanation to refer to the "ideal identity and the continuity of the experienced"<sup>33</sup> All identity, on the

<sup>33</sup> *Bradley, Truth and Reality*, p. 195.

objective side, as we have contended above, must presuppose an identity on the subjective side. Bradley seems to be dissatisfied with his own explanation and offers yet another hypothesis, namely, that the unity of our lives depends upon the "felt background"<sup>34</sup> This perhaps might be accepted as his final solution of the problem which he himself declared as insoluble. But his readers are left in a hopeless confusion when he insists at the same time that the unity and the continuity "consist wholly in content or else they are nothing." This plainly means that continuity on the objective side is possible without identity on the subjective side.

The fact seems to be that Bradley did not solve the problem of identity-feeling which survived the break of psychical continuity. Here at least a most plausible explanation is offered by the advaita philosophy. The shortest explanation, as given by Śaṅkara, is this that "the appearance of unconsciousness here is due to the absence of objects, not to the absence of consciousness."<sup>35</sup> That is, the apparent gap in sleep is due to the fact that there are not here objects which are necessary for self-consciousness, though consciousness persists as an identical principle. Self-consciousness is the consciousness of the self as mediated

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 197.

<sup>35</sup> *Viśayābhārāt iyaṁ acetayamānātā na caitanyābhāvāt*  
—SB II 3. 18.

through the consciousness of objects, and as this mediation is impossible when there is no object, there is, consequently, no self-consciousness in the absence of the objects. Is there no inconsistency here, it is asked in another context, in accepting consciousness as the essence of the self and yet postulating a self in deep sleep which is unconscious of anything?<sup>36</sup> There can be no inconsistency, it is said in reply, between these two positions provided we understand that the self during sleep does see, though it appears to see nothing (*paśyannēva na paśyati*). The sight of the seer, it is continued, is as permanent as the seer himself, much as the heat of the fire is co-eval with the fire. The self in such a state is like the sun which consists essentially in revelation or brightness and yet is talked of as the revealer of things. The sun, that is, has light as its permanent essence, and when it lights up things it does so in virtue of its very essence and not by virtue of its being something other than light.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, the self in deep sleep is called the seer on account of its essential permanent sight. If sight had been a mere activity of the self, a mere accidental property of the self, then, of course, it

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<sup>36</sup> *Com. on the Brh. Up. IV. 3* 23

<sup>37</sup> *Ādityādayo nityaparakāśasvabhāvā eva santah sābhā-  
rīkēna nityenaiva prakāśēna prakāśayanti, na hi aprakāś-  
ātmanah santah prakāśam kuryāntah prakāśayanti iti ucyante*  
—loc. cit.

could not be its essence. On the other hand, the self is said to be not-seeing in deep sleep, because there is not at that time something distinct from itself which it could see. Specific knowledge-events are conditioned by the inner sensibility (*antaḥkāraṇa*), and the sense-organs, and the latter are merged into one in sleep. Hence the self is no more a seer in the ordinary sense.

Śaṅkara's contentions need cause no surprise to us, in so far as they relate to the distinction we have already explained between fragmentary and foundational knowledge, consciousness, we have seen, is not an activity, but the very essence of the self, it is the self. He refers in this context also to the sun and the crystals in illustration of his contention that the different types of knowledge, such as, seeing, hearing, etc., are not different faculties (*śakti*) of the soul, but the latter is, by its very nature, knowledge which appears as different types of knowledge in consequence of the different sense-organs. The really new element in his contentions here is the explanation of the apparent unconsciousness in deep sleep. And it consists in this that the foundational consciousness, though present even in sleep, appears as unconscious owing to the absence of the objects including the modifications of sensibility. Self-consciousness, in other words, is mediated through the consciousness of objects, the latter, again, is conditioned by the mental

modifications produced by the things. Consequently, there can be no such self-consciousness when these conditions of objective knowledge are not fulfilled. In short, the mediated self-consciousness is absent in deep sleep, and hence arises the apparent break or gap in the psychical continuity. The self-conscious self exists, then, as it is put by Śaṅkara, in a state of unity with its real self, it has no more any specific type of knowledge and has no consciousness of outer or inner, just as a man loses all such consciousness when embraced by his beloved.

The epistemological significance of deep sleep has been sorely misinterpreted or ignored altogether. Even the modern idealists who believe in an eternal consciousness slur over the difficulties rather than show how such an eternal principle may be reconciled with the apparent gaps and unconscious intervals. Green, for instance, refers to Locke's admission that the same Socrates, sleeping and waking, must partake of the same consciousness, and remarks that the inference "which it suggests to his reader, that a self which does not slumber or sleep is not one which is born or dies, does not seem to have occurred to him."<sup>38</sup> But no attempt is made to reconcile his theory of eternal self with apparent gaps. If he had done it, he would easily develop some such theory as that of Śaṅkara,

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<sup>38</sup> *Works* I. p. 115.



and perhaps realise that the self-conscious self is absent during the gaps, though the eternal consciousness which is presupposed by the former never sleeps. That is, the mediated self-consciousness which is conditioned by the presence of the objects is also conditioned by an eternal consciousness in which there is no distinction of any kind whatsoever.

There is, however, a particular interpretation of Śaṅkara's theory of dreamless sleep, vouchsafed by no less an authority than Paul Deussen, which must be briefly considered at this place. "Essential to the soul," according to Deussen's reading of Śaṅkara, is "intelligence, but this intelligence is at the bottom imaginary."<sup>39</sup> And, consequently, "it makes in the end no difference whether this for us quite incomprehensible state is characterised in our fashion as Negation of all volition, or in the Indian manner as an imaginary cognition, "which presupposes the Negation of all volition." This is how Deussen would perhaps exonerate Śaṅkara from the charge of intellectualism which he has elsewhere levelled against "the philosophising spirit of mankind in India, Greece and modern times."<sup>40</sup> Such an interpretation, however, of Śaṅkara's theory of dreamless slumber, if true would divest it of any epistemological importance.

<sup>39</sup> *The System of the Vedānta*, p. 315.

<sup>40</sup> *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, p. 132.

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